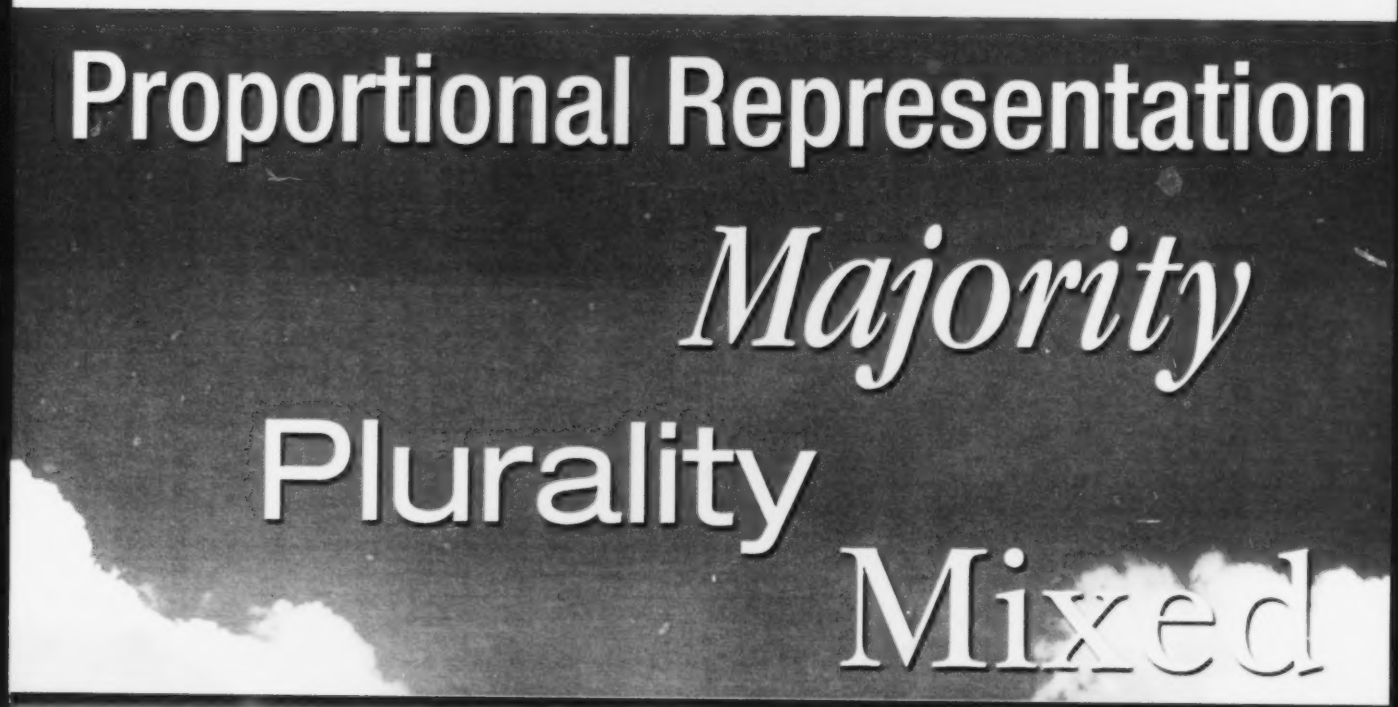
From Votes to Seats:

FOUR FAMILIES OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS



Prepared by Larry Johnston
under the direction of the
Ontario Citizens' Assembly Secretariat

Ontario
Citizens' Assembly
on Electoral Reform
L'Assemblée des citoyens
sur la réforme électorale

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Chapter 1 Introduction to Electoral Systems 1

Chapter 2 Plurality Family
First Past the Post 9

Chapter 3 Majority Family
Alternative Vote 17
Two-Round System 23

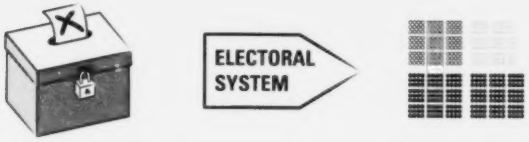
Chapter 4 Proportional Representation Family
List Proportional Representation 27
Single Transferable Vote 36

Chapter 5 Mixed Family
Mixed Member Proportional 41
Parallel 50

Glossary 53

2008-01469/

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO ELECTORAL SYSTEMS



Having citizens elect members of the legislature is a feature common to all democracies. These elected representatives are responsible for making laws, and for approving the raising and spending of public funds. The electoral system is the way citizens' preferences, expressed as votes, are translated into legislative seats.

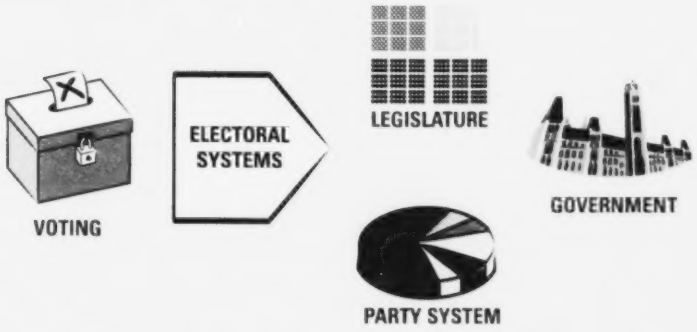
Most people who seek election to the legislature do so as candidates of a political party. This means that turning votes into seats is also a process of distributing the legislative seats among the different political parties (and successful "independent" candidates). The electoral system determines which parties take part in the business of the legislature, and how many seats they have.

In a **parliamentary system,** the makeup of the legislature also determines the type of government (**majority, minority,** or **coalition**), as well as the number and strengths of the opposition parties. In a system of responsible government, the head of government (the prime minister or premier) is usually the leader of the largest party on the government side of the legislature. The electoral system strongly influences the makeup of the government and the selection of its leader.

So the significance of the electoral system goes far beyond its immediate function of translating votes into seats. It also affects the **party system,** the nature of the government, and the composition of the **executive** (the Cabinet).

Political parties group voters with similar political beliefs so they can elect candidates who will promote common policies. In contemporary democracies, where polling and mass marketing expertise drive election contests, parties are indispensable for their ability to gather the resources (human and financial) needed for a successful campaign. Parties may also play a key role in recruiting and training candidates to run for office, and in getting people out to vote.

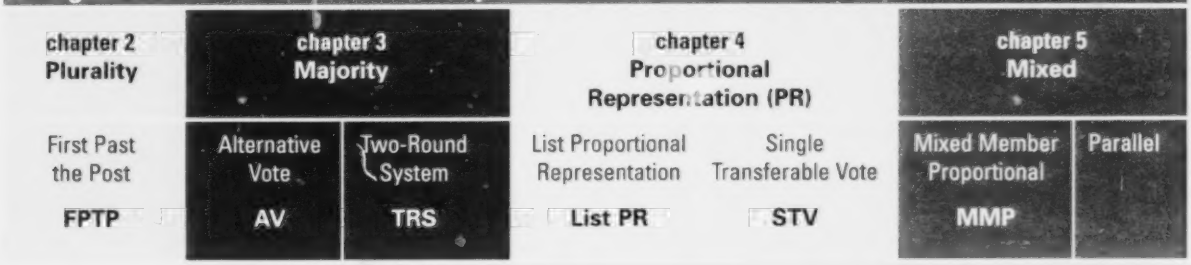
Responsible government is the principle that the executive (the Cabinet) needs to maintain the **confidence** (the support of a majority) of the legislature. In many places, including Ontario, responsible government also means that the members of the Cabinet (ministers) will have seats in the legislature. In this way, those who administer the laws are made accountable to the people's elected representatives.



This booklet discusses four families of electoral systems, how they work, and how counting votes under each system produces different outcomes, whether in the makeup of the legislature, the characteristics of the party system, or the nature of government.

Terms in bold are defined in the Glossary.

Figure 1.1 The Families of Electoral Systems



FOUR FAMILIES OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

The electoral systems discussed in the next four chapters are used in both national and subnational elections around the world. But this booklet focuses primarily on the national level, which provides the best opportunity to illustrate broad trends.

Plurality and **majority** systems generally share the characteristic of electing one representative per **electoral district;** they differ in the **electoral formulas** that decide which candidate wins the seat. The two variations of majority systems (the **Two-Round System** and **Alternative Vote**) use different **ballot types** to reach their final results.

Proportional representation systems seek to minimize the differences between each party's share of the votes cast and its share of seats: they make the distribution of seats **proportional** to the distribution of votes. To do this, PR systems use **multi-member districts,** constituencies that elect more than one member, usually several. The difference between **List Proportional Representation** and **Single Transferable Vote** is in their types of ballots and their counting systems.

Mixed systems combine a group or **tier** of single-member seats (decided by plurality or by majority) with a second group of proportional seats. They differ mainly in the relationships between the two groups of seats. In the **Mixed Member Proportional system,** the distribution of the proportional seats adjusts for the results of the single-member districts, so that the overall outcome is more proportional. When the second-tier seats are used this way, they are identified as adjustment or compensatory seats. In the **Parallel system** the second tier of seats are distributed proportionally but in a non-compensatory way.

Electoral systems can be adjusted to suit their designers or users, but this booklet will look primarily at actual electoral systems now in use. In evaluating the effects and results of these systems, local factors have been separated as much as possible from the characteristics of the systems themselves.

ELEMENTS OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

All electoral systems have three basic elements.

1. District Magnitude

District magnitude (DM) means the number of members elected in each electoral district (**constituency** or **riding**). There are three basic options:

- citizens vote in **single-member** districts, or
- citizens vote in **multi-member** districts, or
- citizens vote in a single-member district and a national or regional multi-member district: this is called a **mixed system.**

2. Electoral Formula

The rules determining who wins the seat or seats is called the **electoral formula.** This element too has three basic options:

- the winning margin is **plurality**: the successful candidate receives at least one more vote than any of the other candidates; or
- the winning margin is **majority**: the successful candidate receives at least one more vote than all of the other candidates (50% +1 vote); or
- the winners are determined by **proportionality** rules, which allocate seats among the candidates in proportion to their shares of the vote.

3. Ballot Type

The **ballot type** covers how the choices (candidate or party) are presented to the voters, and the options available for choosing between them. Again there are three basic possibilities:

- voters use a **categorical** or **exclusive** ballot, which allows each voter to choose only one candidate or party in each race; or
- voters use an **ordinal** or **preferential** ballot, which allows each voter to rank the candidates in order of preference; or
- voters use a ballot that is categorical in one respect (for example, in choosing between parties) and ordinal in another respect (for example, in ranking the chosen party's candidates).

The various electoral systems combine options for each of the three elements in different ways. Any electoral system represents a trade-off between the advantages and disadvantages of the combination of options chosen.

The plurality formula for determining who wins the seat has its origin in contests where there are two candidates. In a two-party (or two-candidate) contest, the winner by plurality (the most votes) also has a majority (more than half the votes). Although plurality systems make it difficult for new parties to flourish – for the simple reason that winning requires attracting more support than all the other, established parties – democracies have tended to develop more than two parties over time.

As the number of candidates increases in a single-member district, the portion of the vote needed to win under a plurality formula becomes smaller (see Table 1.1).

As more candidates run, the minimum share of votes required to win decreases. This means that, as the number of candidates increases, the winner could be elected with the direct support of fewer citizens in the constituency. Once elected, all members will certainly strive to represent all their constituents, but they will also, in most cases, be expected to support their party in the legislature – even if most of their constituents voted for other parties.

Table 1.1 Plurality and the Number of Candidates

Number of candidates	2	3	4	5	6
Minimum vote share needed to win (i.e. plurality)	50%*	33.3%*	25%*	20%*	16.7%*

(* plus 1 vote)

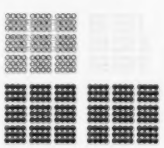
One way to increase the support enjoyed by the winning candidate in broadly contested single-member ridings is to require a majority of votes to win, rather than a plurality. When no one candidate gets a majority at first, majority systems find ways to consolidate the votes of two or more candidates.

Proportional systems tackle the problem from another angle. By using multi-member districts, they attempt to provide representation to more portions of the electorate. The higher the district magnitude – the number of members elected in the constituency – the easier it is to provide a proportional distribution of seats. Implementing multi-member districts can diminish the close attachment of each member to a specific local community and may reduce the ability of voters to hold individual members accountable.

Mixed systems aim to combine the local representation associated with single-member ridings with the proportionality that is possible in multi-member districts. Voters then have some elected representatives whose mandate was derived locally, as well as elected members whose **mandate** was derived "at large" (either regionally or nationally). This mixture can add a different dynamic to the parliamentary and political process.

ELECTION RESULTS

Each electoral system has implications for individual voters within a riding. Its broader effects influence the other components of the political system: legislatures, parties, and governments.



The immediate function of electoral systems is to translate votes into seats. When comparing various systems, voters might ask how well each system makes that translation. For example, is its distribution **proportional**: does each party receive a share of seats that mirrors its share of votes? If not, does the system create patterns of disproportionality? Certain parties might be regularly over-represented – receiving a greater share of seats

Table 1.2 Measuring Proportionality

Districts with more elected representatives can distribute seats in the legislature to represent voters' preferences more closely.

Party	A	B	C	D	E	
% of votes	*20*	*10*	*15*	*30*	*25*	
% of seats won if district has…						**Disproportionality**
1 seat	-	-	-	100	-	70%
2 seats	-	-	-	50	50	45%
3 seats	33	-	-	33	33	25%
5 seats	20	-	20	40	20	15%
10 seats	20	10	10	30	30	5%
20 seats	20	10	15	30	25	**none**

The Loosemore-Hanby index calculates disproportionality in this hypothetical five-party race by (1) measuring the difference between vote share and seat share for each party; (2) adding the five differences; and (3) dividing by two. For example, in the five-seat version of the race, the differences (0 + 10 + 5 + 10 + 5) divided by two come to 15%.

Figure 1.2 Electoral System Families and Elements

	Single-Member Districts (SMDs)		Multi-Member Districts	Mixed (2 types of districts)
Electoral Formula	Plurality	Majority	Proportional	Plurality or Majority ***PLUS*** Proportional
Type of Ballot	Categorical	Ordinal	Categorical*	Categorical*
	FPTP	**AV**	**List PR**	**MMP**
		Categorical	Ordinal	Parallel
		TRS	**STV**	

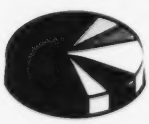
* In some List PR systems an open or free list allows voters to express a preference for one or more candidates, creating an ordinal or quasi-ordinal ballot. An ordinal ballot is also an option in mixed systems but would represent a departure from the usual practice.

than their share of votes – which means that others are underrepresented.

When a party with fewer than half of the votes receives more than half the seats, the government is said to have a **manufactured majority.** When a party gets more seats but fewer votes than another party and wins the election, it is sometimes referred to as a **false winner.**

Another point of comparison is how responsive electoral systems are to shifts in voters' preferences from one election to another. If a party's share of votes increases, does its share of seats increase correspondingly? Or if voters withdraw support from a party, does its parliamentary representation also shrink?

PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS



Parties that are represented in the legislature together with those that are not constitute the party system. A competitive **party system** is a vital part of any democracy. It is important to examine how electoral systems can affect the health of party systems.

Party systems can be distinguished by:

- **size** – the number of parties and their relative strengths,
- **diversity** – the range of perspectives and messages they offer to voters, and
- **competitiveness** – how often the party or parties in government change.

Another useful variable is **volatility:** how well do political parties hold on to their support from one election to another, and what portion of their support comes from long-time, committed supporters? Volatility can also be seen in the turnover of parties: the frequency with which new parties enter the system or established parties fall away.

In all elections, there must be winners and losers. Some votes do not contribute to the election of any candidate or party. Electoral system experts refer to these as **wasted votes** (an unfortunate term because it implies that these votes have no significance). For example, more than 180,000 votes were cast in the 2003 Ontario general

Electoral versus Parliamentary Parties

Parties that succeed in winning seats have a privileged position in determining public policy. These parties are also likely to dominate public debate on issues. It seems unlikely that a party could continue to attract a measure of public support if it were not contributing to public discourse.

Those who study voting and voting systems make a distinction between **electoral** parties (those that attract votes but don't win seats) and **parliamentary** parties (those that win seats). In virtually all democracies, some parties do not win enough votes to gain seats. In other words, the number of electoral parties is always larger than the number of parliamentary parties. How much greater will depend on how the system translates votes into seats. Systems can be compared in terms of how they perform this **gatekeeping** function in the parliamentary party system.

election for parties that did not win seats. Nevertheless, these votes could have had some influence on the election results. For example, several Green Party candidates received more votes than the **margin of victory** of the winner, which means that the outcome of these races might have been different without Green candidates. Still, the result for the Green Party and its supporters was the same with more than 126,000 votes as it would have been if the Green Party had received only 126 votes.

Another type of **wasted vote** is the support that goes to unsuccessful candidates of the parties that do win seats. These votes make a difference in the ridings where they are cast by influencing which other party's candidate wins, but they contribute nothing toward their own party's seat total. This is as true of the votes for the non-winning candidates of the governing party as it is for the opposition parties. Given historical voting patterns, and the frequency with which polling data is reported in the media, voters can often tell in advance that their ballots are likely to be wasted. Since voters generally want the candidate they support to win a seat, the prospect of wasted votes may have the effect of discouraging participation.

Voters do sometimes vote deliberately for a candidate or party that is not their first preference, often for

Strategic Campaigning

Political parties have become more open in recent years about targeting ridings for strategic campaigning – focusing their resources (including the party leader's time) on constituencies where they believe they have a reasonable chance of success. This reflects their judgment that they should not make great efforts in ridings where votes for them are likely to be "wasted."

a negative reason, such as depriving a less-preferred party of a victory. This is called **strategic voting.** Of course, when the ballots are counted, a solid vote of support for Party A looks the same as a reluctant vote for Party A by a supporter of Party C who is trying to keep Party B's candidate from winning.

Both **wasted votes** and **strategic voting** are examples of ways in which the design of an electoral system may influence the success of political parties and shape the voters' relationships with the party system.

GOVERNMENT



After each election, the electoral system and the party system produce a government (and opposition). Defined narrowly, the government is the members (ministers) of the Cabinet; more broadly, the government is the party or parties from which the ministers are drawn. Under the tradition of responsible government when a government loses the confidence of the legislature it is expected to resign. (This, in turn, has led to the development of strong party discipline.) If confidence is lost either a new government is formed, or the legislature is dissolved and an election is held to start the parliamentary cycle anew.

What distinguishes the three types of government – **majority, coalition,** and **minority** – is the way they secure the support of the parliamentary majority that their survival requires.

Majority Government

In a majority government, the Cabinet is drawn from members of the same political party, and that party occupies a majority of seats in the legislature.

Given the strength of **party discipline**, majority governments can usually be expected to serve out their full terms of office, unless they choose to call an early election (where they have the option).

Coalition Government

In a coalition government, the Cabinet is usually drawn from members of two or more political parties that together hold a majority of seats in the legislature. The ability of coalition governments to serve out their whole terms will depend, at least in part, on the strength of the partnership between the parties. Coalition governments are the most likely outcome in systems where it is typical for no party to win a majority of seats. After each election, parties that have the potential to form a coalition will negotiate to craft an agreement about how to distribute the Cabinet seats among the parties, which areas of responsibility **(portfolios)** would be given to which party, and policies to address most major or pressing issues.

Minority Government

In a minority government, the Cabinet is drawn from members of one party (or possibly from a coalition of parties) that has less than a majority of seats in the legislature. To survive, a minority government requires the cooperation of one or more parties in the legislature. A party that is just a few seats short of a majority might be able to rely on the assistance of a like-minded party without going so far as to share the Cabinet. Such cooperative relationships may be formal or informal; in Ontario's last minority government (1985-87), the Liberals governed on the basis of an "accord" that secured support from the NDP for two years, in return for policy commitments that the two parties agreed about. A minority party, particularly one that sits in the middle of the political spectrum, may stay in office for a long time by crafting its policies so that it always has the support of enough opposition parties to survive and never offers a proposal that all other parties might oppose.

Expectations About Government

An electoral system doesn't just determine the nature of any particular government by translating votes into seats; because of patterns in the way it delivers election results, it will also, over time, create expectations about the nature of government. Those expectations will influence the way political actors such as party leaders behave in unusual circumstances. For example, in a system that normally produces one-party majorities, coalition government is rare. If the election results do not give a single party a majority in the legislature, a minority government will take office, but it will rest on three assumptions: (1) that it will be short-lived, (2) that when it is defeated, an election will follow, and (3) that the election will probably bring a return to majority government.

By contrast, in a system where it is unusual for a single party to achieve a majority of seats, coalition government will likely be the norm. If the circumstances are right for the formation of a minority government instead, the assumptions informing it will likely be (1) that it can survive the full term, and (2) if it does not, that it will be replaced by another minority government or by a coalition government.

EVALUATING SYSTEMS

The Citizens' Assembly has been directed to consider eight principles and characteristics in assessing or evaluating electoral systems.

In chapters 2 to 5, electoral systems will be measured against these principles and characteristics wherever possible. But determining whether a particular system embodies one or more of the principles and characteristics is far from straightforward.

The principle that heads the list, "legitimacy," serves as a reminder that electoral systems are closely linked to a population's traditions, its political culture, and even its dominant values. In political systems with single-member districts, for example, people may consider local representation normal and necessary, while that characteristic is of little importance in countries accustomed to larger multi-member constituencies. Some citizens value the opportunities for "voter choice" offered by proportional representation, while others look at the same system and see inconvenience and added complexity in voting, counting, and making sense of the results.

Certain types of electoral systems tend to produce single-party majority governments; others generally lead to coalition majority governments. Which of these is the more "stable and effective" result? That would be a matter of judgment and perspective.

Principle	Characteristics
Legitimacy	The electoral system should have the confidence of Ontarians and reflect their values.
Fairness of representation	The Legislative Assembly should reflect the population of Ontario in accordance with demographic representation, proportionality and representation by population, among other factors.
Voter choice	The electoral system should promote voter choice in terms of quantity and quality of options available to voters.
Effective parties	Political parties should be able to structure public debate, mobilize and engage the electorate, and develop policy alternatives.
Stable and effective government	The electoral system should contribute to continuity of government, and governments should be able to develop and implement their agendas and take decisive action when required.
Effective parliament	The Legislative Assembly should include a government and opposition, and should be able to perform its parliamentary functions successfully.
Stronger voter participation	Ontario's electoral system should promote voter participation as well as engagement with the broader democratic process.
Accountability	Ontario voters should be able to identify decision-makers and hold them to account.

Source: Regulation authorizing the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. The principles and characteristics were recommended by the Standing Committee on Electoral Reform, which presented its report to the Ontario legislature in November 2005.

The principles of "effective parties" and "accountability" raise similar questions in the evaluation of various systems.

Members of the Citizens' Assembly will identify which principles are the most important and decide whether the current system or another one satisfies those principles best. The Assembly can choose to recommend retaining the current system or adopting a different one.

CHAPTER 2 PLURALITY FAMILY

First Past the Post

Found in: Barbados, Bermuda, Canada, Dominica, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Trinidad & Tobago, Uganda, United Kingdom (House of Commons), United States, Zambia, and other countries

First Past the Post (FPTP) is the electoral system with which Ontario citizens are most familiar. It is currently used in elections for all the provincial and territorial legislatures and for the Canadian House of Commons. Since most of the countries using it were once within the British empire, it might be called the "British system" although, ironically, its use in the United Kingdom is now largely confined to the election of members of the House of Commons. Also called **Single-Member Plurality (SMP)**, it is a very simple electoral system and may be the oldest in continuous use.

In the British Isles today, the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly employ a **mixed system**, and the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Republic of Ireland use **Single Transferable Vote**. For elections to the European Parliament, the U.K. and Ireland both use **List Proportional Representation**.

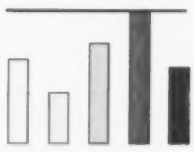
ELEMENTS OF FPTP



Element 1: District Magnitude

Each geographic **electoral district** elects one member to the legislature. Within a range of variation (to take account of geographical distances), each district contains roughly the same population. This is to ensure that each vote carries roughly the same weight.

Element 2: Electoral Formula



The **plurality formula** determines the winning candidate to be the one who gets more votes than any other candidate – the one who is "first past the post." As in a horse race, the winner simply has to finish ahead of all other competitors. The analogy is somewhat misleading, however, because it suggests that there is a fixed finish line to be crossed. In fact, it does not matter how many votes the winner gets so long as the total is at least one more than any other candidate's.

Element 3: Ballot Type

Candidate A	•
Candidate B	•
Candidate C	•
Candidate D	⊗
Candidate E	•

Voters mark one and only one candidate's name, using a **categorical** (or **exclusive**) **ballot**. It is one of the simplest ballots that require the voter to make a mark. The flip side of its simplicity is that it conveys little information. Some see it as a candidate-centred ballot, but in reality the same mark must also convey the voter's **party preference**. Studies suggest that for many voters, the decision is more likely to be influenced by considerations such as the party and its leader than by the identity of the local candidate.

HOW IT WORKS

All candidates run in **single-member districts**. Each eligible voter has one vote, and votes by making a specific mark (such as an X) on a categorical ballot. Votes are tallied for each candidate, and the one with the highest total in a district is declared elected. The vote for the candidate is also the vote for that candidate's political party (and a sign of support for its platform and leader). Party standings in the legislature reflect the number of districts each party has won; they do not necessarily correspond to the parties' vote totals.

Terms in bold are defined in the Glossary

A key feature of single-member districts is that they create **winner-take-all** contests. There is one prize and one winner in each riding; unlike race-horses, no candidate gets a payout for place (coming in second) or show (third). Because the winners will be only the top vote-getters in all the individual riding contests, there can be significant differences between voters' support for the political parties and the makeup of the legislature.

Suppose, for example, that a country has a 100-seat legislature, and 52% of the population supports Party A while 48% supports Party B. You might expect elections to produce a legislature with 50 or more Party A members and 40 or more Party B members. But if this is a very uniform society, it is possible (if unlikely) that in every riding, the Party A candidate might win 51% to 53%, and the Party B candidate 47% to 49% – in other words, Party A would win every seat although the two parties are not far apart in voter support.

As noted in Chapter 1, the proportion of votes with which it is possible to win a riding decreases as the number of candidates increases. With three parties, one party could finish second in *every* riding, losing half to one rival and half to the other. The consistently second-place party could even end up with the largest overall vote share but win no seats. It happened in Manitoba in the 1926 federal general election (see Table 2.1), although this particular result is extremely unusual. In a case such as this, the resulting legislature is not merely distorting the public's voting intentions but even contradicting them.

Table 2.1 Manitoba, Federal Seats, 1926

Party	% of Votes	Number of Seats	% of Seats
Conservative	42.2	0	0
Labour Progressive	19.5	7	41.2
Liberal	18.4	4	23.5
Progressive	11.2	4	23.5
Labour	8.7	2	11.8
TOTAL	**100.0**	**17**	**100.0**

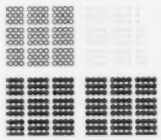
At the other extreme, but not as unusual, a strongly supported first-place party can win *all* the seats. This happened in New Brunswick in 1987 (see Table 2.2), and almost 4 in 10 New Brunswickers ended up with provincial representatives they had not voted for.

Table 2.2 New Brunswick, Provincial Election, 1987

Party	% of Votes	Number of Seats	% of Seats
Liberal	60.4	58	100.0
Progressive Conservative	28.6	0	0
NDP	10.6	0	0
Independent	0.4	0	0
TOTAL	**100.0**	**58**	**100.0**

The results of a FPTP election are straightforward within each riding but may become perplexing when all the results are put together. At times, FPTP elections can be very **proportional**, but in general, the winner-take-all nature of Single-Member Plurality contests tends to exaggerate disparities in support.

ELECTION RESULTS UNDER FPTP



FPTP systems are often **two-party systems** in which one party will win a majority of the individual races. Because of the winner-take-all nature of FPTP, it is not surprising that the winning party often receives a **seat bonus** (a share of seats greater than its share of votes): it is overcompensated in the translation of votes to seats. Because the number of seats is fixed, if one party is overcompensated (receives a bonus), then another party must be under compensated (suffers a deficit).

Comparing the share of votes with the share of seats in recent elections in Ontario, Canada, and the U.K. (see Table 2.3) reveals the seat bonuses received by the winning parties (as well as the corresponding deficits suffered by other parties). In all three examples, the system is particularly sparing in its allocations to the third party, and the largest two parties continue to dominate the scene. FPTP makes it difficult for some kinds of new parties to succeed (such as broad-based national parties), while enhancing the chances of others (such as concentrated regional parties).

Any new party faces the challenge, in single-member districts, of having to finish ahead of *all* the established parties. It may take several elections to build levels of support that will allow a party's

Table 2.3 Recent Elections in Ontario, Canada, and the United Kingdom

Ontario, Legislative Assembly, 2003

Party	% of Votes	Number of Seats	% of Seats
Lib	46.4	72	69.9
PC	34.6	24	23.3
NDP	14.7	7	6.8
Grn	2.8	0	0
Other	1.5	0	0
TOTAL	**100.0**	**103**	**100.0**

Lib = Liberal Party
PC = Progressive Conservative Party
NDP = New Democratic Party
Grn = Green Party

Canada, House of Commons, 2006

Party	% of Votes	Number of Seats	% of Seats
Con	36.3	124	40.3
Lib	30.2	103	33.4
NDP	17.5	29	9.4
BQ	10.5	51	16.6
Grn	4.5	0	0
Ind	0.5	1	0.3
Other	0.5	0	0
TOTAL	**100.0**	**308**	**100.0**

BQ = Bloc Québécois
Ind = Independent

United Kingdom, House of Commons, 2005

Party	% of Votes	Number of Seats	% of Seats
Lab	35.2	356	55.1
Cons	32.4	198	30.7
Ldem	22.1	62	9.6
UKIn	2.3	0	0
SNP	1.6	6	0.9
Grn	1.0	0	0
DemU	0.9	9	1.4
Sfein	0.6	5	0.8
Other	3.9	10	1.5
TOTAL	**100.0**	**646**	**100.0**

Lab = Labour Party
Cons = Conservative Party
Ldem = Liberal Democratic Party
UKIn = U.K. Independence Party
SNP = Scottish Nationalist Party
Grn = Green Party
DemU = Democratic Union
Sfein = Sinn Fein

candidates to finish first in a significant number of ridings, and voters may lose patience with a party that appears unable to elect its candidates. New or small parties that attempt to appeal broadly to all voters will have the most difficulty under FPTP. Parties like the NDP (Canada), the Liberal Democrats (U.K.), and the Greens (both countries) may be said to persist *despite* the electoral system rather than because of it.

Table 2.4 illustrates the electoral record of the Liberal Democrats in the U.K. since 1974. At the height of its popularity, in 1983, the party attracted the support of one in four British voters, yet received only 3.5% of the seats in the House of Commons.

On the other hand, parties with support that is concentrated in a smaller number of ridings are more likely to elect candidates. For this reason, among smaller parties, those that promote regional issues tend to enjoy greater success, as witnessed by the results for the Bloc Québécois in Canada and, at times, the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) and the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Fein (both based in Northern Ireland). Results for the Bloc Québécois and the federal NDP in Canada for the past four elections (Table 2.5) show just how different the outcome of FPTP races can be for a regionally concentrated party and for one that attracts voters in regions across the country (although, like other federal parties, the NDP has its own areas of regional strength).

The same characteristics may also prompt the larger, well-established parties to pay attention to and cultivate regional areas of strength, as has often been the case in Canada. If a party succeeds in establishing a strong

Table 2.4 Liberal Democratic Party, United Kingdom, 1974-2005

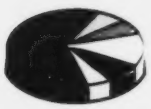
Year	1974 (1)	1974 (2)	1979	1983	1987	1992	1997	2001	2005
% of Votes	19.3	18.3	13.8	25.4	22.6	17.8	16.8	18.3	22.1
% of Seats	2.2	2.0	1.7	3.5	3.4	3.1	7.0	7.9	9.6
Seat deficit	-17.1	-16.3	-12.1	-21.9	-19.2	-14.7	-9.8	-10.4	-12.5

Table 2.5 Regional Concentration versus Broad Appeal, Canada, 1993-2004

	Bloc Québécois			NDP		
Year	% of Seats	% of Votes	Number of Seats	% of Seats	% of Votes	Number of Seats
1993	18.3	14.0	54	3.1	7.0	9
1997	14.6	10.7	44	7.0	11.0	21
2000	12.6	10.7	38	4.3	8.5	13
2004	17.5	12.4	54	6.2	15.7	19

plurality within a particular region, it may become the only one sending representatives from that region to the legislature; the failure of those with other perspectives in that region to gain a parliamentary voice may further reinforce the regional dimension of politics.

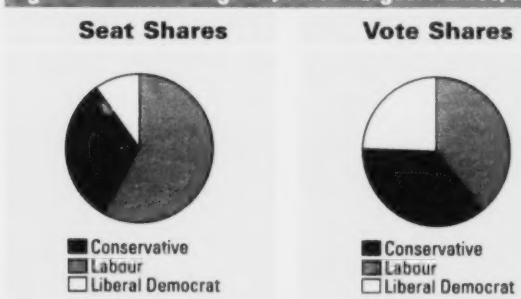
PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS



Although the number of parties contesting elections and winning seats has increased in many FPTP countries (the United States being one of the most notable exceptions), the number of parties regularly winning a significant share of seats usually remains two or sometimes three.

The size of a **party system** depends not only on the number of parties winning seats but on their relative strengths. Even though 12 parties won seats in the 2005 U.K. election, four parties won only one seat, and nine parties won less than 2% each of the 646 seats at stake. The top two parties controlled almost 86% of the seats. In its distribution of seats, the British House of Commons could be said to have, at most, a two-and-a-half-party system, as shown in Figure 2.1. Vote shares among the same three parties, however, more nearly approximate those of a three-party system.

Figure 2.1 United Kingdom, Three Largest Parties, 2005



The U.K. example illustrates how FPTP can perform a **gatekeeping function**, reducing the size of the party system as it translates the support for **electoral parties** (those that win votes) into seats for **parliamentary parties** (those that win seats). This contributes to the stability of the party system, because it limits the entry of new parties or minimizes their impact. On the other hand, it may limit the diversity of perspectives heard in the legislature and make the system less competitive by giving an advantage to the established parties.

There is often considerable **volatility** in the support for parties in FPTP systems, which could be due to a number of possible causes. The influence of the electoral system may be the degree to which it motivates political parties to identify, retain, and expand their core vote. When political parties campaign strategically at each election by concentrating on those ridings that their polling data tells them might be "winnable," the implicit message is that votes in other ridings may, at least this time around, be expendable. Voters' commitments to political parties may be as changeable as they perceive the parties' commitment to them to be.

In general, FPTP is an electoral system that can at times be unresponsive to voters' wishes and is often unpredictable. In 1990, the Ontario NDP won 74 of 130 provincial seats with 37.7% of the vote; in 1959, with only a little less of the vote, 36.7%, the Ontario Liberals won only 21 of 98 seats. Here a 1% difference in votes translated into a 35.5% difference in share of seats.

The **margin of victory** can vary greatly within a plurality system. Table 2.6 shows three types of constituency results in a two-party race: landslide, solid margin, and squeaker.

The overall share of votes that each party gets may have less influence on the seat results than the margins of victory in individual races. Table 2.7 shows three different scenarios for an election for

Table 2.6 Margins of Victory

"Landslide"	"Solid Margin"	"Squeaker"
Winner: 65%	Winner: 55%	Winner: 52%
Loser: 35%	Loser: 45%	Loser: 48%

Table 2.7 Margins of Victory and Election Results

	Election 1		Election 2		Election 3	
	Party A	Party B	Party A	Party B	Party A	Party B
Landslides	40	-	37	-	47	-
Solid Margins	-	10	-	13	-	25
Squeakers	20	30	34	16	2	26
Total Seats	**60**	40	**71**	29	49	**51**
Difference (A minus B)	*+20*		*+42*		*-2*	

Overall vote share in each election is as follows: Party A = 55%, Party B = 45%.

a 100-seat legislature in which Party A gets 55% of the total votes and Party B gets 45% of the votes.

Party A wins its seats by landslides or by squeakers; Party B's victories are solid margins or squeakers. In Election 1, Party A wins 40 seats by a landslide and 20 squeaker seats. The result is that Party A wins the election with 60 seats, 20 seats more than Party B's total. But in Elections 2 and 3, the outcome is dramatically different depending on how many seats each party wins by a landslide, a solid majority, or a squeaker. The difference in the seat shares possible with the same overall vote shares demonstrates the unpredictability of FPTP election results.

Many examples document the unresponsive nature of FPTP, including instances where the system has rewarded a party whose vote share *declined* since the previous election (as with Ontario's Progressive Conservatives in 1990), and where a party whose vote share increased wound up with fewer seats (as with Ontario's NDP in 1987 and 2003, and the Progressive Conservatives in 1999). In addition to mixing up the message sent by the electorate, the unpredictability and unresponsive character of FPTP raise issues of accountability and legitimacy.

GOVERNMENT



In a long-standing pattern, FPTP tends to yield single-party **majority governments**. This is not surprising given the characteristics that work in the direction of a two-party system and the regularity with which the winning party is given a seat bonus. On the other hand, as more parties are able to establish a parliamentary presence, as in Canada's federal parliament, the likelihood of **minority government** increases. Of Canada's last 17 federal governments, 8 have been minorities. The string of six straight majority governments from 1980 to 2004 may turn out to have been an exception.

The same reasons that connect FPTP to majority government also make it likely that a government will have a **manufactured majority**, with one party receiving the majority of seats although it has attracted fewer than half of the votes. Since 1921, there have been 16 majority governments at the federal level; of these, 13 were manufactured by the electoral system. Every one of Ontario's 14 majority governments since 1943 has also been a manufactured majority.

The association of single-party majority government with FPTP and the ability of FPTP to manufacture majorities mean that within an FPTP system, single-party majority government becomes the rule, the accepted norm about what government not only will be but should be. When no party wins a majority, the largest one, or the party previously in power, will attempt to govern with a minority in the legislature. It is generally expected that such an administration will not last long, that its defeat in the legislature will lead immediately to an election, and that the election will have a good chance of returning a majority government. With this set of expectations, **coalition government** is hardly even considered, and minority governments rarely attempt to formalize partnerships with other parties, let alone entertain the possibility of serving out a full term. When Ontario's Liberals and NDP reached an accord that gave the minority Liberal government some security in 1985, it was intentionally crafted to last only two years.

Not infrequently, FPTP produces a **false winner**: the party finishing second in votes receives more of a seat bonus than the most popular party and

Meeting Expectations

Of Canada's seven minority governments between 1957 and 2005, only one lasted more than two years, and it lasted less than three. In all seven cases, defeat of the minority government led to an election, and in four

finishes ahead in seat standings. The most recent examples were in British Columbia in 1996 and Quebec in 1998. In each of these cases, the party that felt the election was "stolen" from it called for electoral reform in its next campaign platform. But it should be stressed that a party that has received a seat bonus has done nothing wrong or underhanded; it has simply benefited from how the electoral system works.

False Winners

1896, Canada: Conservatives outpoll Liberals 46.1% to 45.1%, but Liberals outseat Conservatives 118 to 88.

1898 and **1902**, Ontario: Conservatives outpoll Liberals 48.1% to 47.3% and 50% to 47.6%, but Liberals win two majorities: 51 of 94 seats and 50 of 98 seats.

1996, British Columbia: Liberals win 41.8% of vote to 39.5% for NDP, but NDP wins 39 seats to 33 for the Liberals.

1998, Quebec: Liberals win 43.6% of vote to 42.9% for Parti Québécois, but PQ wins 76 seats to 48 for the Liberals.

EVALUATING FPTP

Legitimacy

FPTP is certainly consistent with the experience of Ontario voters. In particular, its use of single-member districts means that voters have identifiable representatives associated with their community (**geographic representation**), who may be expected to share their interests or to communicate with them in performing their parliamentary roles. Research indicates this is strongly valued by most Canadian voters. In addition, this system is praised for its simplicity and **transparency**. On the other hand, rates of participation in many FPTP jurisdictions have been declining, suggesting that the system may have lost legitimacy with some voters.

Fairness of Representation

While FPTP (like all other systems) allows for **representation by population**, its single-member districts make it weak in providing proportionality for parties. Instead, FPTP tends to result in **wasted votes** and **manufactured majorities**. FPTP is also generally weak in promoting social or **demographic representation**, because it fails to provide the **compensatory mechanisms** (such as gender-balanced candidate lists) that allow parties to promote diversity. However, just as FPTP favours small parties with regionally concentrated support, the plurality rule may favour ethnic minorities that dominate within particular ridings.

Voter Choice

The categorical ballot offers voters a single choice that expresses an unranked preference for a candidate and for a political party at the same time. The smaller size of party systems in FPTP countries means there are fewer candidates to choose from. In two-party environments, the choice may be between two radically different platforms with little common ground or between two sets of policy positions that are difficult to distinguish from each other.

On the other hand, FPTP is easy for voters to use – almost any other system requires more effort on the part of voters – and it is easy to understand, at least at the constituency level.

Effective Parties

FPTP supports stable, strongly disciplined parties by maintaining a fairly high **effective threshold** that new parties must reach if they are to gain a share of seats in proportion to their vote share. This electoral system can be a strong filter, keeping the number of parliamentary parties smaller than the number of electoral parties. This is an effective safeguard against fragmentation of the party system. But new parties that attract a fair measure of support may be restricted unduly. Regional differences tend to be amplified rather than lessened. Voters' attachments to specific parties may be weak or very flexible, which can contribute to considerable **volatility** in the levels of party support from one election to another.

Stable and Effective Government

FPTP electoral systems have historically been associated with one-party majority governments, despite recent Canadian experience. Given the high likelihood that such governments will serve out their full terms of office, FPTP systems are also identified as providing stable government, providing some measure of predictability to all those who are affected by government policy-making. Similarly, the secure control of the policy agenda that the system gives to the majority party provides as much guarantee as is possible that it

will be an effective government. In contexts where the legitimacy of the state is still in doubt (a new country, for example, or one with a history of military takeovers), the stability and effectiveness of the government may be especially key issues. The stability of governments had special strategic importance during the Cold War era.

A second element of stability is the likelihood of continuity between governments. A majority government's control of policy for four or five years may result in a solid legacy of achievements, which a subsequent majority government of a different ideological perspective may proceed to dismantle or undo. The freedom that a majority government has from the need to compromise and cooperate with other parties may make it effective, but it can also lead to dramatic policy swings when the government changes that can be destabilizing for social and economic stakeholders. Canadian experience under FPTP has often reflected the two extremes: long periods of dominance by one party in successive governments, and successive majorities by different parties committed to reversing the policies of the preceding government or to taking the country or province in a new direction.

Effective Parliament

The parliamentary world has two dominant traditions or legislative styles. Within the Westminster model, clearly associated with two-party environments and with FPTP electoral systems, the style is oppositional, with a strong, stable government party facing a strong, identifiable opposition. The other style, associated with multi-party systems, is more consensual, with an emphasis on accommodation and compromise, achieved through coalition government and frequently seeking the cooperation of all parties, whether within government or in opposition. Although FPTP is historically linked to the Westminster tradition and usually generates a party system that allows the identification of a government and an opposition, the disproportionalities it can create may lead to one-party dominance and a weak (sometimes almost non-existent) opposition. There have been many instances in Canada of this phenomenon. In addition to the 1987 New Brunswick election noted above, the 2001 British Columbia election returned Liberals in 77 of 79 seats (97.5% of seats) with 57.6% of the vote. With 21.6% of the vote, the NDP won 2 seats, and with 12.4%, the Greens were shut out.

Voter Participation

Although rates of voter participation have been declining almost everywhere, under every system, FPTP systems have recently had some of the lowest rates. In the last seven provincial elections in Ontario, the average turnout was 60.7%; it declined from 73.5% in 1971 to 56.8% in 2003. In the last seven general elections in Canada (not including 2006), the average was 69.9%; it declined from 76.7% in 1972 to 60.9% in 2004. In 2006, the federal turnout rate increased to 64.7%, in what was viewed by many as one of the closest elections in years.

The stronger the voter's perception that one vote won't matter – either because of a belief that his or her preferred candidate has no chance, or because of a belief that the preferred candidate has it all wrapped up – the less incentive there is to vote. To be sure, there are many reasons to vote, including the satisfaction of fulfilling one's civic duty and of having registered one's preference, but these are personal reasons and do not change the fact that **wasted votes** and **surplus votes** (i.e. votes a candidate receives beyond the total necessary to win a seat) have no direct role in the outcome. (At the federal level in Canada, however, recent changes in political party financing make every vote count toward the funding of a candidate's party. This means that even if the vote does not help elect a representative, at least it helps the party raise funds to contest the next election, at which time the party may be more successful.)

Accountability

FPTP is often identified as providing clear accountability; when the norm of single-party majority governments holds, the party responsible for government policies is unmistakable, and voters may respond by voting for or against candidates of that party at the next election. The connection is straightforward in a two-party system, but matters become more complicated when more than two parties can consistently attract a reasonable level of support. The ability of voters to hold the government responsible then depends upon the responsiveness of the electoral system; the record of FPTP is not consistent in this regard, either in rewarding parties that win more votes and penalizing parties that lose votes, or in making the rewards and penalties proportionate to the changes in the levels of party support.

Similarly, the candidates who are elected within each riding are directly chosen by their constituents and cannot serve again without regaining the support of a plurality. In FPTP, voters who want to punish a party for its record must withdraw support from its candidate, and conversely, to reward a member who has provided good representation, voters must also support that member's political party. In short, the local member and the political party with which he or she is affiliated are jointly accountable.

OTHER PLURALITY SYSTEMS

In addition to FPTP or Single-Member Plurality (SMP), other plurality systems exist, although they are not common.

Block Vote and Party Block Vote

A Block Vote (BV) system uses the plurality electoral formula (FPTP voting) in multi-member constituencies. Each voter has as many votes as there are seats to be filled and may vote for any candidate. If citizens vote for members of the same party, as they often do (hence "block" vote), the system will display, in an exaggerated way, many of the characteristics of FPTP systems, such as their tendency to produce disproportionality. Block Vote is used only in a handful of countries. Party Block Vote (PBV) differs in that each citizen has one vote that is used to select a party list. Voters have no choice among the candidates, and the party that wins the most votes in the constituency wins all the available seats. PBV may be useful where it is desirable for parties to provide an ethnically diverse slate of candidates (for instance, where strong minority populations might otherwise be excluded). Like Block Vote, Party Block Vote tends to produce very disproportional results.

Single Non-Transferable Vote

Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) is a system in which voters have one vote, and plurality counting is used in a multi-member district. The system diminishes voter choice, and it can be made more proportional only by diminishing voter choice still more (by increasing the size of districts). Large, well-established parties can profit, as Japan's Liberal Democrats did before electoral reform in 1993.

CHAPTER 3 MAJORITY FAMILY

Alternative Vote

Found in: Australia, Fiji, New Guinea (2007)

A relatively rare system, used only in Australia and a couple of neighbouring countries, **Alternative Vote (AV)** is one of the two principal varieties of **majority systems**. The other, the **Two-Round System (TRS)**, is discussed later in this chapter. The AV system is easy to adopt in **First Past the Post (FPTP)** jurisdictions and was tried in three Canadian provinces between 1924 and 1956.

Manitoba used AV in ridings outside Winnipeg between 1924 and 1955, Alberta used AV in ridings outside Calgary and Edmonton between 1924 and 1956, and British Columbia used AV in provincial elections in 1952 and 1953.

ELEMENTS OF AV



Element 1: District Magnitude

Each geographic **electoral district** elects one member to the legislature. Within a range of variation (to take account of geographical distances) each district contains roughly the same population. This is to ensure that each vote carries roughly the same weight.

Element 2: Electoral Formula



The **majority formula** determines the winning candidate to be the one with more votes than *all* other candidates – that is, with at least 50% of the votes plus one. Unlike FPTP, AV does have a fixed finish line that a candidate must cross in order to win. If there are only two candidates in the race, the winner will automatically receive a majority of the votes. Even where two parties dominate the scene, however, it is unusual for there to be only two candidates. Candidates from small or unrecognized (unofficial) parties or running as independents may also run. The problem that majority systems must solve is how to ensure that one candidate will receive a majority of votes in a race that has more than two competitors. Alternative Vote systems rely on a specific type of ballot to provide the solution.

Element 3: Ballot Type

Candidate A	5
Candidate B	2
Candidate C	3
Candidate D	1
Candidate E	4

The Alternative Vote system employs an **ordinal** or **preferential ballot**. It allows the voter to indicate not only a first preference but also a set of *alternatives* (ranked 2, 3, and so on). There are various ways of counting ordinal ballots. In a majority system, all ballots are counted on the basis of first preferences: the votes are allocated to the candidate marked "1." If no candidate has received a majority, then the ballots on which the last-place finisher was marked "1" are reallocated to the candidates marked "2" on those ballots. This process continues until one candidate has received a majority.

Two ways of counting preferential ballots are shown in Table 3.1. Under AV, Candidate A has the greatest number of first preferences but ends up losing the seat to Candidate B when the second preferences of those who voted for Candidate C are transferred. In the AV system, the second (or further) preferences for only the candidates who are eliminated at each round are considered. The alternative preferences of those who voted for the first- or second-place candidates receive no consideration.

In a variation on preferential voting called the Borda count, all the preferences on all the ballots are counted, with preferences weighted according to

Terms in bold are defined in the Glossary.

Table 3.1 Counting Preferential Votes

The riding has 124 votes, so the total needed to win is 63 (62 + 1 = 63).

Alternative Vote

1st Preferences			2nd Preferences (from C)		Total
Candidate A	56	+	5	=	61
Candidate B	44	+	19	=	**63**
Candidate C	24				124
	124				

Borda Count

Preferences	1st		2nd		3rd		Total
Count		(x1)		(x½)		(x⅓)	
Candidate A	56	(56)	40	(20)	28	(9.3)=	**(85.3)**
Candidate B	44	(44)	40	(20)	40	(13.3)=	(77.3)
Candidate C	24	(24)	44	(22)	56	(18.7)=	(64.7)
	124		124		124		

their rank. This system is currently used only in the tiny Oceanic nation of Nauru. When all preferences are counted, Candidate A wins the seat, but with less than a majority.

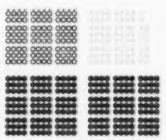
HOW IT WORKS

In AV all candidates run in **single-member districts**. Each eligible voter has one ballot and votes by ranking all the candidates in order. For the ballots to be transferable – which is necessary in order to assemble a majority of votes for one candidate – voters must rank *all* the candidates; this is called **required preferential voting**. In addition, the ranking must be complete, with no ties or missed numbers. For example, in a riding with five candidates, the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 must all appear beside the five candidates' names in some sequence. Any other series, such as "1, 2, 2, 3, 4" or "1, 2, 3, 4" with one space blank would spoil the ballot or, in other words, make the ballot **informal**.

All ballots are initially counted on the basis of first preferences. If a candidate's total is at least 50% of the total number of valid ballots, plus one vote, he or she is elected. If no candidate has received a majority, the **distribution of preferences** begins. The ballots for the last-place candidate are transferred to the candidates marked as second preferences on those ballots. This process continues until one candidate's first, second, and further preferences, as necessary, add up to a majority.

Like other systems with single-member districts, the AV system is a set of **winner-take-all** contests. There is one seat and one winner in each riding. Because the winners will be only the top vote-getters in all the individual riding contests, there can be significant differences between voters' support for the political parties and the makeup of the legislature.

ELECTION RESULTS UNDER AV



Majority systems such as AV are able (like FPTP) to produce majorities in the legislature, but (unlike FPTP) AV is designed to produce majorities at the constituency level. In the 2001 Australian general election, 87 of 150 ridings (58%) did not decide their races on the basis of first preferences, and therefore required distribution of preferences to determine the winner. In 2001, six candidates who had the highest number of first-preference votes but were short of a majority lost after preferences were distributed; this happened seven times in 1996 and 1998.

Because of the winner-take-all nature of this system, the winning party often receives a **seat bonus** (a share of seats greater than its share of votes): it is overcompensated in the translation of votes to seats. Because the number of seats is fixed, if one party is overcompensated (receives a bonus), then another party (or parties) must be under compensated (suffers a deficit).

The results of the 2001 and 2004 elections illustrate several typical features of AV in Australia (see Table 3.2). The two established parties, Liberal and Labour, each received about 40% of the vote, and in each election received a seat bonus. The stronger parties benefit under AV because each of these parties is likely to be the second choice of other voters. The Liberals, in particular, benefit from a long-standing arrangement with the National Party; supporters of either party rank the other party's candidates second. This arrangement creates the Liberal-National coalition, known in Australia simply as "the Coalition." (AV was introduced in 1918 as a means by which rival conservative parties could, without amalgamating, successfully oppose the otherwise dominant Labour Party, a tradition carried on by the Liberals and Nationals.) This relationship partly explains why in 2004 the Nationals, with just under 6%, won 12 seats (down from 13 in 2001), while the Greens, with more than 7%, won none. (The rest of the

Table 3.2 Elections in Australia

House of Representatives, 2001

Party	% of Votes	Number of Seats	% of Seats
Lab	37.8	65	43.3
Lib	37.1	69	46.0
Nat	5.6	13	8.7
Dem	5.4	0	0
One N	5.0	0	0
Grn	4.3	0	0
Oth/Ind	4.8	3	2.0
TOTAL	**100.0**	**150**	**100.0**

House of Representatives, 2004

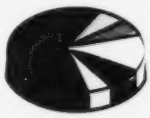
Party	% of Votes	Number of Seats	% of Seats
Lib	40.8	75	50.0
Lab	37.6	60	40.0
Nat	5.9	12	8.0
Grn	7.2	0	0
Dem	1.2	0	0
One N	1.2	0	0
Other/ Ind	6.1	3	2.0
TOTAL	**100.0**	**150**	**100.0**

Lab = Labour Party
Lib = Liberal Party
Nat = National Party
Dem = Democratic Party
One N = One Nation
Grn = Green Party
Other/ Ind = Other Parties/ Independents

explanation is the regional concentration of National Party support.)

Even more than FPTP, AV is normally grudging in its allocations to the third and smaller parties. Even regionally concentrated parties find it difficult to make a breakthrough, because a plurality of support is not, in itself, sufficient to win. Unless they can build majorities on their own, such parties require, under AV, the committed second-preference support of members of another party in order to succeed. In the last four Australian elections, the Greens and One Nation have polled more first-preference votes than the Nationals at least once, and three times the Democrats almost matched the Nationals' totals. Of these smaller parties, only the National Party won any seats. In the last election, support for the Democrats and One Nation fell drastically enough to suggest that many supporters had given up on them. Between 1972 and 1987, in eight elections, no other parties and no independents secured a seat. In six elections since 1987, 15 independents have been elected, including five in 1996.

PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS



Because of preferential balloting, there are different ways to measure support for political parties. The results in Table 3.2 show only the first preferences registered for each party. As noted, more than half the seats may be decided by a distribution or transfer of preferences. For statistical purposes, the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) completes the transfer of all ballots to either the Labour Party or the National-Liberal coalition in every district, regardless of whether a candidate won an outright majority. The results are called **two-party-preferred** percentages, and the AEC views them as the most accurate way of comparing electoral support for the two party groupings that have dominated Australian elections since AV was adopted in 1918.

Table 3.3 Party Support and Government Makeup in Australia, 1980-2004

	Two-party-preferred votes *(% of votes)*		Government		
Year	**Labour**	**Coalition***	**Party**	**% of Seats**	**Bonus (%)**
1980	49.6	50.4	Coalition	59.2	8.8
1983	53.2	46.8	Labour	61.0	7.8
1984	51.8	48.2	Labour	55.4	3.6
1987	50.8	49.2	Labour	58.1	7.3
1990	49.9	50.1	Labour	52.7	2.8
1993	51.4	48.6	Labour	54.4	3.0
1996	46.4	53.6	Coalition	63.6	10.0
1998	51.0	49.0	Coalition	54.0	5.0
2001	49.0	51.0	Coalition	54.7	3.7
2004	47.3	52.7	Coalition	58.0	5.3

* The Coalition is made up of the National Party and the Liberal Party

The two-party-preferred votes show a party system with two major groups that are almost evenly matched, with remarkable stability (see Table 3.3). If the Liberal and National parties are treated as two factions of one party (as they are by many observers of Australian politics), then this is a classic example of a **two-party system**.

One disadvantage of the two-party-preferred tallies is that they obscure the sometimes sizable

expressions of support for parties that do not receive seats. Perhaps even more strictly than FPTP, AV performs a **gatekeeping function**, reducing the size of the party system as it translates the support for **electoral parties** into seats for **parliamentary parties**. This contributes to the stability of the party system but may also limit the diversity of perspectives heard in the legislature and make the system less competitive by giving a strong advantage to established parties.

GOVERNMENT



In every Australian election from 1980 to 2004, the party that formed the majority government benefited from a seat bonus, or what the Australians call an "exaggerated" majority. AV is also, like FPTP, capable of generating **false winners**: in 1990 and 1998, the group with fewer two-party-preferred votes took the majority of seats (this also happened in 1954, 1961, and 1969).

Minority government is extremely unlikely under Australia's AV system, and in the present party system it is all but impossible. In one interpretation, Australia has majority **coalition government** half the time and single-party **majority government** the rest of the time. However, the partnership between the Liberal and National parties is so strongly established that to call it a coalition seems inappropriate. Whereas most coalition governments are established after an election through a process of negotiation, the Liberals and Nationals enter the election as partners, committed to supporting each other's candidates. As has been noted, cooperation between parties preceded the introduction of AV in Australia; similarly, in the only Canadian province where AV led to the formation of coalitions (British Columbia), cooperative behaviour between the parties preceded its introduction.

One of the unique features of the Australian electoral system is the use of How-to-Vote cards, which parties and interest groups distribute to their supporters. Voters may take them into the polling station to copy from when filling out their ballots. The National Party instructs its supporters to vote Liberal second, and the Liberal Party tells its supporters to vote National second; studies indicate that very few of either party's supporters do otherwise.

In general, AV shares many of the characteristics associated with FPTP, such as the tendencies to support or strengthen a two-party system, to manufacture solid majority governments, to encourage **strategic voting** (casting a preferential ballot is, at least in part, an exercise in strategic voting because it allows voters to express support for candidates other than their first choice), and to impede the emergence of new parties.

EVALUATING AV

Legitimacy

The central feature of AV is that it is a majority system. The fact that representatives are elected by more than half of their constituents can help to solidify their legitimacy in the eyes of voters. Although the preferential ballot ensures that candidates are elected with a majority, it also makes voting more onerous than when a **categorical ballot** is used. In Australia, voters are required to rank every candidate on the ballot paper or their vote is considered invalid. Many Australians would prefer **optional preferential voting**, which would allow them to rank as many or as few candidates as they choose. Even though voting is compulsory in Australia (the fine for failing to turn out is $20), in the last election only 94.3% of citizens cast ballots, of which 4.9% were spoiled (informal).

Fairness of Representation

Single-member districts allow for **representation by population**, but the majority electoral formula in these ridings makes AV weak in providing **proportionality** for parties. AV is also generally weak in promoting social or **demographic representation**, because it fails to provide the **compensatory mechanisms** (such as gender-balanced candidate lists) that allow parties to promote diversity. That being said, Australia's ranking in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's list of legislatures with the highest proportions of female parliamentarians is 32nd (Canada is 45th). Distribution of preferences is just as likely to work against ethnic minorities that are strong within particular ridings as it is to work for them.

Voter Choice

The preferential ballot increases the amount of information that voters are able to communicate. At the same time, the requirement that voters rank all candidates and complete the ranking correctly

puts greater demands on the voter, although this difficulty is offset by the use of How-to-Vote cards. When AV was introduced in western Canada, it led to higher rates of spoiled ballots.

Although voters express a preference for each candidate and party, the two are inseparable: it is not possible to give a candidate one preference and his or her party a different preference. The small size of party systems under AV means there may be fewer candidates and parties to choose between. In two-party environments, the choice may be between two radically different platforms with little common ground or, at the other extreme, between two sets of policy positions that are difficult to distinguish.

Table 3.4 Non-Monotonicity in AV

Scenario 1: Lower Support for Party A

	1st Preferences		2nd Preferences (from Party C)		TOTAL
Party A	39	+	26	=	**65**
Party B	35	+	0	=	35
Party C	26				
TOTAL	100				100

Scenario 2: Higher Support for Party A

	1st Preferences		2nd Preferences (from Party B)		TOTAL
Party A	49	+	0	=	49
Party C	26	+	25	=	**51**
Party B	25				
TOTAL	100				100

When it comes to **transparency** (how easy it is to understand the system), AV has been known to generate some curious results in rare instances. For example, it is possible for a candidate to hurt his or her electoral chances by attracting more first-preference votes. (The technical name for this phenomenon is **non-monotonicity**: gaining more support but finishing worse off, or losing support and finishing better off.) In Scenario 1 in Table 3.4, all of the third-place Party C candidate's ballots are transferred to Party A. This gives Party A a total of 65 votes, and its candidate is elected. In Scenario 2, Party A's candidate decides to work harder to win over Party B voters. Ten of those voters switch their first preferences to Party A; the others stick with Party B, with Party C as their second preference. Now Party B will come in third in the first count, but Party A still has not won a majority. The combination of Party C's first-preference votes, which held steady, and the second-preference votes transferred to it from Party B deliver victory to Party C.

Effective Parties

AV, like FPTP, supports stable, strongly disciplined parties by maintaining a fairly high **effective threshold** that new parties must reach if they are to gain a share of seats consistent with their vote share. This electoral system can be a strong filter, keeping the number of parliamentary parties smaller than the number of electoral parties. This is an effective safeguard against fragmentation of the party system. On the other hand, new parties that attract a fair measure of support may be penalized unduly. Australian voters' attachments to specific parties appear to be fairly strong, which may account for the relative stability in the levels of party support from one election to another.

Stable and Effective Government

The AV system in Australia regularly returns majority governments. The strong probability that these governments will serve out their full terms also associates AV with stable government, offering some measure of predictability to those who are affected by government policy-making. Similarly, the secure control of the policy agenda that the system gives to the majority party provides as much guarantee as is possible that they will be effective governments.

A second element of stability is the likelihood of continuity between governments. A majority government's control of policy for four or five years may result in a solid legacy of achievements which a subsequent majority government of a different ideological perspective may proceed to dismantle or undo. The freedom that a majority government has from the need to compromise and cooperate with other parties may make it effective, but it can also lead to dramatic and potentially destabilizing policy swings when governments change. The Australian experience has been that one party or the other has long periods in power.

Effective Parliament

The AV system in Australia generates a party system and a pattern of majority government with a strong

opposition that are clearly consistent with the Westminster style of parliamentary government. As in FPTP, the pattern of strong majority government may contribute to a considerable degree of executive dominance.

Voter Participation

Because voting is compulsory under Australian law, no inferences can be drawn about AV's effect on participation. In the three Canadian provinces that used AV, participation rates are reported to have been consistent with long-term trends in those jurisdictions – in other words, its effect was not measurably different than that of FPTP.

While it is true that, by definition, there will be fewer **wasted votes** in a majority system than in a plurality model, this is a somewhat artificial achievement because of the requirement that voters assign preferences properly to all candidates, even ones they don't support. Optional preferential voting might allow a more accurate measurement of wasted votes under AV.

Accountability

When the norm of single-party majority governments holds, it is clear who is responsible for government policies, and voters may respond by voting for or against candidates of that party at the next election. The ability of voters to hold political parties responsible then depends upon the responsiveness of the electoral system. The record of AV, like that of FPTP, is not consistent in this regard, either in rewarding parties that win more votes and penalizing parties that lose votes, or in making the rewards and penalties proportionate to the changes in the levels of party support.

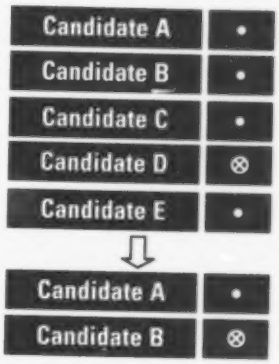
As for the candidates who are elected within each riding, these are directly chosen by their constituents and cannot serve again without regaining the support of a majority. In AV (as in FPTP), to punish a party for its record, voters must withdraw support from its candidate, and conversely, to reward a member who has provided good representation, voters must also support that member's political party. In short, the local member and the political party with which he or she is affiliated are jointly accountable.

MAJORITY FAMILY

Two-Round System

Found in: Belarus, Egypt, France, Iran, Mali, Mauritania, Mongolia, Togo, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, and other countries

The Two-Round System (TRS), best known for its use in France, is the second principal variety of majority systems. Former French colonies also use it, as do an eclectic assortment of states, few of which would normally be considered strong democracies. TRS may be more practical than AV in countries with **multi-party systems**, where the complexities of AV's required preferential voting could be considerable.



ELEMENTS OF TRS

Element 1: District Magnitude



Each geographic **electoral district** elects one member to the legislature. Within a range of variation (to take account of geographical distances) each district contains roughly the same population. This is to ensure that each vote carries roughly the same weight.

Element 2: Electoral Formula



The **majority formula** determines the winning candidate to be the one with more votes than all other candidates – that is, with at least 50% of the votes plus one. The problem that majority systems must solve is how to ensure that one candidate receives a majority of votes in a race with more than two competitors. The strategy of Two-Round Systems is to reduce the number of candidates, ideally to two, for the second round or runoff, thereby guaranteeing that the winning candidate in the second round gets a majority.

Element 3: Ballot Type

The Two-Round System uses a **categorical ballot** with which voters choose only one candidate's name. The flip side of its simplicity is that it conveys little information. The same type of ballot is used in the second round of voting, but with fewer choices.

HOW IT WORKS

All candidates run in **single-member districts**. Each eligible voter has one vote, and votes by making a specific mark (such as an X) on a categorical ballot. Votes are tallied for each candidate, and any candidate who secures a majority (50% plus one vote) is elected. In districts where no candidate secures a majority, the number of candidates is reduced and a runoff takes place, usually one week later. The vote for the candidate is also the vote for that candidate's political party (and a sign of support for its platform and leader). Party standings in the legislature reflect the number of districts each party has won; they do not necessarily correspond to the parties' vote totals or proportions.

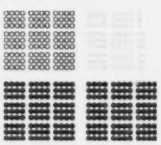
In a pure majority system, if a second round of voting is required, only the top two finishers in the first round are retained on the ballot, ensuring that one will receive a majority in the second round. This is done in the French presidential elections, and it is the most popular system for direct elections of the head of state, used even in many countries that elect their legislature under another system. For the French legislature, if a second round of voting is required, all candidates who received more than 12.5% of the vote may choose to remain on the

ballot. Whoever wins the most votes (a **plurality**) at the second round wins the seat: the French legislative electoral system is actually a majority/plurality system.

In practice, many of the second-round contests in French legislative elections have turned out to be majority contests. In France's multi-party environment, there have often been two major parties on the left competing against two major parties on the right. Like-minded parties often strike alliances with one another to support in the second round whichever of their candidates finishes first in the first round. In the second round, then, one principal contender on the left in each district faces one principal contender on the right. Such a practical reduction of the race to two candidates does not work if parties emerge from outside the traditional left/right division, such as the populist National Front or ecological parties.

A key feature of single-member districts is that they provide **winner-take-all** contests. There is one prize and one winner in each riding. Because the distribution of seats among the parties reflects only the top vote-getters in the individual riding contests (and in this way excludes the votes for all the non-winning candidates), there can be significant differences between voters' support for the political parties and the makeup of the legislature. These differences can become more pronounced as a result of adding a second round of voting to the process.

ELECTION RESULTS UNDER TRS



Majority systems such as TRS are able (like FPTP) to **manufacture majorities** in the legislature, but they also create artificial or manufactured majorities at the constituency level. In the 2002 elections for the French National Assembly, 519 of 577 ridings (89.9%) did not deliver a majority of first preferences to any candidate, and therefore required runoff rounds of voting to determine the winners (see Table 3.5). The bulk of the seats went to the major party on the right (the Union for a Presidential Majority – UMP) and to the major party on the left (the Socialist Party). The considerable **seat bonus** received by the UMP was enough to give it a majority in the legislature. About one in five French voters voted for parties that gained no representation in the assembly, including more than 11% who voted for the National Front.

Results for the previous election in 1997 (Table 3.6) illustrate why France's TRS system is recognized as one of the most disproportional in established democracies. The winning Socialist Party benefited from a sizable seat bonus, as did both of the major conservative parties, the RPR (later called the UMP) and the Union for French Democracy (UDF). In this election, the nearly 15% of voters who chose the National Front were rewarded with one seat. Even more striking, the National Front (something of a controversial party) won its one seat with a first-round total of 14.9%, while the UDF won 109 seats with an almost identical first-round total of 14.2%.

A frequent criticism of TRS is that it discourages participation in the second round, because many voters whose candidates are eliminated from the ballot may choose not to vote a second time. In 2002, for example, the turnout for the first round was an all-time low of 64.4%, and it dropped in the second round to 60.4%.

Table 3.5 France, National Assembly, 2002

Party	% of Vote Round 1	Seats Won Round 1	Seats Won Round 2	Total Seats	% of Seats
UMP	33.3	47	310	357	61.9
UDF	4.9	6	23	29	5.0
MiscR	3.7	1	7	8	1.4
Other	1.6	-	5	5	0.9
Allied Right	**43.5**			**399**	**69.2**
Soc	24.1	3	138	141	24.4
Comm	4.8	-	21	21	3.6
Green	4.5	-	3	3	0.5
RadL	1.5	-	7	7	1.3
MiscL	1.1	1	5	6	1.0
Allied Left	**36.0**			**178**	**30.8**
NF	11.3	-	-	-	-
H&F	1.7	-	-	-	-
Other	7.5	-	-	-	-
Unallied	20.5	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	**100.0**	**58**	**519**	**577**	**100.0**

UMP = Union for the Presidential Majority
UDF = Union for French Democracy
MiscR = Miscellaneous Right Wing
Soc = Socialist Party
Comm = Communist Party
RadL = Left Radical Party
MiscL = Miscellaneous Left Wing
NF = National Front
H&F = Hunting, Fishing, Nature, Traditions Party
RPR = Rally for the Republic

Table 3.6 France, National Assembly, 1997

Party	% of Vote, Round 1	Total Seats	% of seats
Soc	23.5	246	42.6
Comm	9.9	37	6.4
Green	3.6	7	1.2
RadL	1.6	13	2.3
MiscL	1.7	9	1.6
Other	1.0	7	1.2
Allied Left	**41.3**	**319**	**55.3**
RPR	15.7	140	24.3
UDF	14.2	109	18.9
MiscR	4.2	6	1.0
Other	2.4	2	0.3
Allied Right	**36.5**	**257**	**44.5**
NF	14.9	1	0.2
Other	7.2	-	0
Unallied	**22.1**	**1**	**0.2**
TOTAL	**99.9**	**577**	**100.0**

UMP = Union for the Presidential Majority
UDF = Union for French Democracy
MiscR = Miscellaneous Right Wing
Soc = Socialist Party
Comm = Communist Party
RadL = Left Radical Party
MiscL = Miscellaneous Left Wing
NF = National Front
RPR = Rally for the Republic

But in 1997, the opposite was the case, with the turnout increasing from 67.9% in the first round to 71.1% in the second.

PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS



France has the type of multi-party system normally found in countries that use a **proportional representation** system, although it has a considerable degree of **disproportionality**. The French party system is typical of European systems in containing a family of parties on the right and a family of parties on the left, without a strong party of the centre (although most major left-wing parties in Europe today can accurately be described as centre-left). France also has, like many European countries, a far-right populist party (the National Front) that draws much strength from its anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies. Several more small parties are grouped under the "Misc" and "Other" headings in Tables 3.5 and 3.6.

In the 2002 election, voters in the various districts had, on average, 15 candidates to choose from in the first round.

The French party system is also characterized by high **volatility**, with some of the biggest swings from one party or party group to another. For example, from 1997 to 2002 the Allied Left lost 5.3% of its vote, but its seat share declined by 24.5% (see Tables 3.5 and 3.6). In the same period, the Allied Right gained 7.0% in its vote share, but its seat share increased by 24.7%. This illustrates the extent to which small shifts in the popular vote can have a disproportionate effect on the makeup of the French National Assembly.

GOVERNMENT



When the UMP won a majority of seats in the 2002 legislature, it was only the third time since 1958 that a party had managed to do so. More typically, the French government is a **coalition**, either of parties on the right (for instance, the RPR and the UDF after the 1993 election) or of parties on the left (the Socialist-led government after the 1997 election). Generally, French coalitions are stable and complete their four-to-five-year terms. A complicating factor in comparing French governments is the existence of a strong, directly elected presidency in addition to the parliamentary government led by a prime minister.

EVALUATING TRS

Aspects of TRS that would be familiar to Ontario voters include single-member districts and categorical ballots. On the other hand, the cost and inconvenience of voting twice might seem burdensome. In recent elections, a large and increasing proportion of the French electorate seems to have withdrawn from the system.

TRS provides extremely volatile and disproportionate results, is hard on small parties and extremist parties, and yet sustains a diverse range of parties across the ideological spectrum. The 2002 French legislative election, which set a record for low turnout, also set a record for the most candidates. While voter

choice is very extensive in the first round, it obviously declines considerably in the second round. France's record on gender-balanced representation is not stellar (it is ranked 85th by the Inter-Parliamentary Union), reflecting, perhaps, the absence of any **compensatory mechanism** in TRS that parties wishing to promote gender balance could exploit. In recent years, significant numbers of French voters have been without a representative voice in the legislature. This is because the second round of voting eliminates many voters' first preferences from further consideration. At the same time, the fact that each winning candidate has received a majority of the votes, in either the first or the second round, could be seen as a legitimizing force, much as in AV. Elected members can act decisively, knowing that they have the support of the majority of those who voted.

TRS is another system that does not allow voters to express a preference for a candidate separately from their preference for political party (see **vote splitting**). The volatility of election results and the frequent reorganization of parties, particularly on the right, mean that parties are looser, less disciplined bodies than in some other parliamentary systems. The coalitions that form tend to be between like-minded parties, and new governments usually include no partners from the previous administration. The system produces a clearly identifiable government and opposition, and there is no doubt about who is responsible for government policies.

TRS does not allow voters to express a preference for a candidate separately from their preference for a political party. As elsewhere, the ability of voters to hold political parties to account depends upon the responsiveness of the electoral system; like AV and FPTP, TRS has an inconsistent record, either in rewarding parties that win more votes and penalizing parties that lose votes, or in making the rewards and punishments proportionate to the changes in the levels of party support.

CHAPTER 4 PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION FAMILY

List Proportional Representation

Found in: Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and other countries

List Proportional Representation (List PR) is the most common electoral system in the world, counting by the number of countries (70 or more, close to 35%) that use it. It dominates among the established democracies of western Europe, the new democracies in eastern Europe, and the countries of Central and South America. It is also now the most common in Africa. Some PR systems are among the most complicated electoral models in use, and there is more variety within this family than within some of the simpler electoral systems.

List PR is the system used by 23 of the 25 member states of the European Union to elect members to the European Parliament.

ELEMENTS OF LIST PR

Element 1: District Magnitude



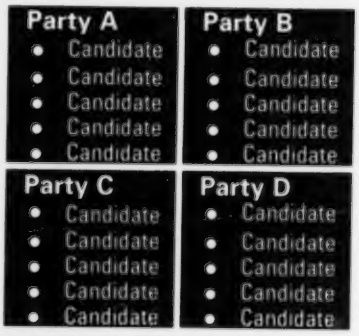
Each geographic **electoral district** elects more than one member, usually several, to the legislature. **District magnitudes** can vary greatly, from five or six seats at the lower end to 150 at the other extreme, in the Netherlands, where the entire legislature is elected from a single national district. Sweden is probably more typical, with 29 **multi-member districts** averaging 11 members each. While the district magnitude may vary, in most cases each member represents approximately the same number of people. Some countries, like Sweden, elect most members to a first regional tier but then reserve a second tier of seats to be used as **adjustment seats** to improve the overall **proportionality** of the final results. In Sweden, the **second tier** is composed of 39 additional seats calculated nationally and allocated to the districts.

Element 2: Electoral Formula



List PR systems use a **proportional representation** formula designed to distribute the seats in multi-member constituencies in a proportional manner. The larger the district magnitude, the more proportional the results will be. Two types of methods are common: the **Largest Remainders** method, which uses a quota; and the **Highest Averages** method, which uses a series of divisors applied to the parties' vote totals.

Element 3: Ballot Type



In the simplest versions of List PR, voters are given a set of ballots, one for each party, and they vote by placing one of these ballots in the ballot box. This is a **categorical ballot**. Each ballot will usually contain a list of the party's candidates. An important distinction in List PR is between **closed lists, open lists,** and **free lists**, which vary in the amount of information voters may give about their ranking of their preferred party's candidates and, in some cases, about the candidates of other parties, too.

HOW IT WORKS

A List PR system employs multi-member districts and a **proportional representation** formula, characteristics it shares with the **Single**

Terms in bold are defined in the Glossary

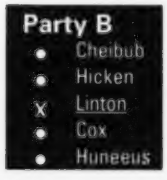
Transferable Vote (STV) system discussed later in this chapter. Its defining feature is the use of a **party-list ballot**. In some cases, this means each party presents the voter with a separate ballot with its candidates presented in ranked order; in others, voters receive the lists of all parties on a single comprehensive ballot. Voting is normally done by selecting and submitting one party's ballot, or by selecting one party and its candidates on a comprehensive ballot.

Types of Party Lists

Different systems use different ways of presenting each party's candidates to voters on the ballot.



The majority of List PR systems use a **closed list**. It is the multi-member-district equivalent of a categorical ballot, a take-it-or-leave-it proposition. Candidates appear on each party's ballot in the rank order determined by the party, and any seats won by that party will be filled in order, starting at the top of the list. Sometimes the names of the party's candidates do not even appear on the ballot, only the party's name, symbol, and the name and/or picture of its leader. Closed lists enable parties to give a high ranking to candidates of particular backgrounds or from specific segments of society without input from the voters. The party's control over the ranking of candidates is a powerful tool in keeping parties disciplined; a member or candidate who strays from the party's positions or criticizes the leader may wind up much lower down on the ballot next time around.



With an **open list**, voters may re-order or alter the ranking of the candidates that the party has provided. At its simplest, this allows voters to identify the one candidate they prefer. In Sweden, this option gives a candidate who receives a certain proportion of votes (at least 8% of the votes for his or her party in the constituency) a higher chance of being elected. At the other extreme, an open list allows voters to rank all of their preferred party's candidates, essentially turning the list into a **preferential ballot**. The open list has at least three possible effects: first, it may undermine any effort by parties to promote diversity or affirm hitherto disadvantaged segments of society; second, it weakens the ability of the party to use the ranking of candidates as a disciplinary tool; and third, it may put candidates of the party in competition with each other, undermining the unity and harmony of the party.



A **free list** provides the maximum amount of voter choice. It allows voters to vote for and rank any of the candidates, regardless of party. Switzerland's system is the best-known example. Swiss voters are welcome simply to cast the party ballot as they receive it (as if it were a closed list), or they may change the order of names on the ballot (as if it were an open list). In addition, so long as they cast only the same number of votes as there are seats in the district, they may:

- cross names off the party ballot and substitute others from other parties' ballots or lists (called *panachage*)
- cross names off the ballot and vote more than once for a preferred candidate (*cumulation*)
- use a blank ballot to put the names of individuals from different parties in a preferred order.

In this model, if a voter casts a party ballot, that party receives as many votes as there are seats in the riding, and each candidate receives one vote for each time his or her name appears on a ballot. This means that even if some candidates from other parties are written onto a ballot, the party vote remains with the party whose ballot it is. In this scenario, the voter gives all his or her support to one party, but, recognizing that other parties will also win seats, seeks to influence which of their candidates will win those seats.

Voters may also use a blank ballot and write in the names of candidates from two or more parties. In this case, each party gets as many votes as the number of votes for its candidates.

Free ballots can make the act of voting much more involved, and they certainly complicate the counting. Party votes are counted first, to determine how many seats each party has won in the district, and then candidates' votes are counted to identify who will fill those seats.

Proportional Representation Formulas

The formulas used to divide seats among the parties are another significant feature of List PR systems.

Although it is easier to divide seats proportionally among the parties with List PR's multi-member



Party A wins five party votes.

Each Party A candidate receives one vote.



Party C wins five party votes.

Candidate Schultze wins two votes; Reeger, Linton (Party B), and Wilde (Party A) win one vote each.



Party C wins three party votes; Party B and Party A win one vote each.

Candidate Schultze wins two votes; Reeger, Linton (Party B), and Wilde (Part A) win one vote each.

districts than with the single-member districts of other systems, it is rare that all the vote totals will be evenly divisible by the number of seats. Here are the vote totals in a hypothetical 15-seat constituency:

Party	A	B	C	D	E	TOTAL
Votes	200	500	300	100	400	1500

The division of seats here would be simple:

Party	A	B	C	D	E	TOTAL
Votes	200	500	300	100	400	1500
Seats	2	5	3	1	4	15

But another set of results would not divide so obviously:

Party	A	B	C	D	E	TOTAL
Votes	290	380	270	195	365	1500

List PR systems use one of two methods: the Largest Remainders method and the Highest Averages method. In the following section, these methods will be applied to determine the allocation of seats for the results above.

The **Largest Remainders method** relies on **quotas;** the process of determining each party's number of seats begins by dividing its vote total by the quota used in its electoral system. There are three widely used methods of calculating quotas.

The **Hare quota**, the simplest, is calculated by dividing the number of votes by the number of seats to be decided. In Table 4.1, the Hare quota is 100 (1500 votes ÷ 15 seats). Dividing each party's vote total by the quota delivers 11 full-quota seats. The four remaining seats are given to the parties with the largest remainders: Party D (0.95) followed by Party A, Party B, and Party C.

The **Droop quota** and the **Imperiali quota** are smaller than the Hare quota; the effect is to leave fewer seats to be allocated according to remainders. These formulas favour the larger parties and slightly reduce overall proportionality.

Using the Droop quota, in Table 4.2, the second-largest party (E) gains a seat at the expense of the second-smallest (C). Using the Imperiali quota, in Table 4.3, the second-smallest party keeps its third seat, but there are now too many seats. When such a result occurs the rule in most cases is to recalculate the result using the Droop quota.

The differences produced by these quotas may not seem very significant, but variations of one or two seats in every constituency could influence the overall standings significantly, so the choice of quota or formula could be important for a system for which proportionality is one of the guiding principles.

The **Highest Averages** method uses sets of numbers (i.e. divisors) to make a series of comparisons of the parties' vote totals. (The label "highest averages" may be difficult to understand because the term averages is used in an unfamiliar way.) After each comparison, the party with the highest number is awarded the seat, and its total is divided by the next divisor. The next comparison finds the highest number among the new set of totals. The process continues to create new sets of totals to choose from until all seats are awarded.

The simplest set of divisors is the **d'Hondt formula,** which uses the series 1, 2, 3, 4, and so on. After being awarded its first seat, each party's total is divided by 2; if it is awarded a second seat, the initial total is divided by 3, and so on.

In Table 4.4, the first seat goes to Party B because it has the highest initial total. After this seat is awarded, Party B's total is divided by the next divisor, 2. The second seat goes to Party E, because its total is higher than any other party's initial total and higher than Party B's new total. This process continues as Parties A, C, and D receive seats 3, 4, and 5. At this point, every party's initial total has been divided by 2. The sixth seat goes to Party B, because this party has the highest total after dividing by 2. After this seat is awarded, Party B's total is

Table 4.1 Hare Quota = Votes ÷ Seats

Party	Votes	Divided by Hare Quota	Full-Quota Seats	Remainder	Remainder Seats	Total Seats
A	290	2.90	2	0.90	1	3
B	380	3.80	3	0.80	1	4
C	270	2.70	2	0.70	1	3
D	195	1.95	1	0.95	1	2
E	365	3.65	3	0.65	0	3
TOTAL	**1,500**		**11**		**4**	**15**

The Hare quota is calculated by dividing the total votes (1500) by the number of seats (15). In this example, the quota is 100.

Table 4.2 Droop Quota = Votes ÷ (Seats + 1)

Party	Votes	Divided by Droop Quota	Full Quota Seats	Remainder	Remainder Seats	Total Seats
A	290	3.09	3	0.09	0	3
B	380	4.04	4	0.04	0	4
C	270	2.87	2	0.87	0	2
D	195	2.07	2	0.07	0	2
E	365	3.88	3	0.88	1	4
TOTAL	**1,500**		**14**		**1**	**15**

The Droop quota is calculated by dividing the total votes (1500) by the number of seats plus 1 (16). In this example, the quota is 93.75, or 94.

Table 4.3 Imperiali Quota = Votes ÷ (Seats + 2)

Party	Votes	Divided by Imperiali Quota	Full Quota Seats	Remainder	Remainder Seats	Total Seats
A	290	3.30	3	0.30	0	3
B	380	4.32	4	0.32	0	4
C	270	3.07	3	0.07	0	3
D	195	2.22	2	0.22	0	2
E	365	4.15	4	0.15	0	4
TOTAL	**1,500**		**16**		**0**	**16**

The Imperiali quota is calculated by dividing the total votes (1500) by the number of seats plus 2 (17). In this example, the quota is 88.23, or 88.

divided by the next divisor, 3. The new total for Party B (127) is still larger than the current total for Party D, which means that before Party D wins its second seat, Party B will have won its third. The process continues until all 15 seats have been allocated. Working through the comparisons allows one to see how each party would fare if the district had fewer seats or more seats. In this final result, Party C seems unfairly treated, since its vote share is much closer to Party A's than to Party D's; in fact, if there were a 16th seat to award, Party C would receive it.

The **Sainte-Laguë formula** uses only odd numbers as divisors. The **modified Sainte-Laguë formula** substitutes 1.4 for the first divisor. In Table 4.5, the first 11 seats are awarded in the same order as under the d'Hondt formula, but from that point on the larger divisors of the modified Sainte-Laguë formula change the order in which seats are allocated. In the end, Party C has one more seat and Party E one fewer than under the d'Hondt formula. This seems unfair to Party E, whose total is much closer to Party B's than to the totals for Parties A and C; if there were one more seat in this district, it would go to Party E.

The use of slightly larger divisors in Sainte-Laguë formulas makes the products of the divisions smaller. This often makes it more difficult for small parties to gain their first seat, although the effect is not noticeable in Tables 4.4 and 4.5. Smaller products give parties with more votes a greater number of opportunities to take advantage of their larger vote total.

Although there are different ways of distributing seats in List PR systems, the results are not dramatically different (Table 4.6). In fact, they are close enough so that if this hypothetical district had one more seat, each of the five processes would have yielded the same distribution of seats. The results are similar because all these methods are designed to achieve proportionality. The differences that do exist relate to the **gatekeeping function** that decides which small parties are awarded seats. The Hare quota tends to be the most accommodating to small parties, with the modified Sainte-Laguë formula and the Droop quota next. The d'Hondt formula is less accommodating to small parties, and the Imperiali quota rates lowest of all on this measure. In general, a formula that is more accommodating to small parties is more proportional.

Table 4.4 D'Hondt Formula

Party	Votes						Total Seats
	Total	Votes ÷ 1	Votes ÷ 2	Votes ÷ 3	Votes ÷ 4	Votes ÷ 5	
A	290	290 (3rd)	145 (8th)	97 (13th)	73		3
B	380	380 (1st)	190 (6th)	127 (10th)	95 (14th)	76	4
C	270	270 (4th)	135 (9th)	90			2
D	195	195 (5th)	98 (12th)	65			2
E	365	365 (2nd)	183 (7th)	122 (11th)	91 (15th)		4
TOTAL 1500							**15**

The d'Hondt formula makes a series of comparisons using the numbers 1, 2, 3, and so on as divisors. The numbers in parentheses show the order in which the seats are awarded.

Table 4.5 Modified Sainte-Laguë Formula

Party	Votes						Total Seats
	Total	Votes ÷ 1.4	Votes ÷ 3	Votes ÷ 5	Votes ÷ 7	Votes ÷ 9	
A	290	207 (3rd)	97 (8th)	58 (13th)	41		3
B	380	271 (1st)	127 (6th)	76 (10th)	54.3 (14th)	42	4
C	270	193 (4th)	90 (9th)	54 (15th)	39		3
D	195	139 (5th)	65 (12th)	39			2
E	365	261 (2nd)	122 (7th)	73 (11th)	52		3
TOTAL 1500							**15**

The modified Sainte-Laguë formula makes a series of comparisons using the numbers 1.4 followed by 3, 5, 7, and so on as divisors. The numbers in parentheses show the order in which the seats are awarded.

Table 4.6 Comparing Proportional Representation Formulas

Formula/Quota	Party				
	A	B	C	D	E
With 15 seats					
Hare quota	3	4	3	2	3
Droop quota	3	4	2	2	4
Imperiali quota*	3	4	2	2	4
D'Hondt formula	3	4	2	2	4
Modified Sainte-Laguë formula	3	4	3	2	3
With 16 seats					
All formulas/quotas	3	4	3	2	4

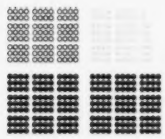
*With 15 seats, the Imperiali quota generated 16 seats, so the results were calculated using the Droop quota.

Thresholds of Support

Another factor affecting proportionality in List PR systems is thresholds of support, which can be either **effective** or **formal**. The **effective threshold** is the level of support that, in practice, a party requires in order to win seats. The larger the **district magnitude**, the smaller the effective threshold. For example, in the Netherlands, which has a single electoral district with 150 seats, the effective threshold is 0.67%. In some Danish districts that have 15 seats, the effective threshold is 6.7%. A **formal threshold** is a legally prescribed level of support that a party must receive in order to

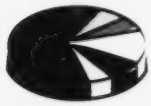
win seats. For example, in Israel, parties must receive at least 2% of the vote in order to qualify for seats, while in Turkey, parties must receive at least 10%. The higher the threshold, effective or formal, the less proportional the system will be.

ELECTION RESULTS UNDER LIST PR



List PR systems produce very proportional legislatures, with any **disproportionality** caused by formal thresholds or constituencies with few seats. There are few if any **wasted votes** in such systems, which tend to be more responsive to changes in voter support and less volatile than non-proportional systems. Both **manufactured majorities** and **false winners** are theoretically possible but extremely unlikely, because of the proportionality of results.

PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS



List PR systems, like other proportional representation systems, support **multi-party systems**. List PR is efficient in translating vote shares into seat shares, so formal thresholds and low district magnitudes are the only effective barriers that keep **electoral parties** (those receiving votes) from also being **parliamentary parties** (those winning seats). Countries with the largest district magnitudes tend to have the largest party systems, particularly if they have no formal thresholds. The Netherlands and Israel are two famous examples of countries with a single national constituency – and therefore a very high number of seats in one district – but they are the exception rather than the rule.

In most cases, the large number of parties in PR countries allows a great diversity of perspectives to be placed before the electorate. Most party systems in **plurality** or **majority systems** (except in France) tend to support one party of the right, one party of the left, perhaps a party of the centre, and perhaps an alternative party such as the Greens (or, in Canada's case, the Bloc Québécois). In most large multi-party systems, there will be two or more left-of-centre parties, two or more right-of-centre parties, a centre party, a "green" party or two, and other parties that represent more specific segments of society, such as the anti-immigrant parties that have been emerging in Europe or the agrarian parties that used to be more common. Under PR, smaller parties may still have an important role to play in a multi-party legislature. A party like the Green Party, typically shut out of seats under **First Past the Post (FPTP)**, **Alternative Vote (AV)**, or the **Two-Round System (TRS)**, is able to participate in government as part of a coalition under PR, as Greens have in Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, and Italy. At the same time, like other systems that focus on parties, PR systems tend to elect few, if any, independent candidates. An independent who wants to win a seat generally has to either join a party or form one.

An agrarian party is a good example of a party that could not hope to prosper under FPTP, AV, or TRS in any economically advanced democracy. Urbanization, industrialization, and the mechanization of agriculture mean that potential support for a party representing agricultural interests is limited – much too small to win more than a handful of seats under a plurality or majority system. In a PR multi-party environment, however, the seats that an agrarian party might hold could be critical to putting together a coalition government or to sustaining a minority administration. In fact, in a PR system, any party that attempts to appeal to everyone (glossing over the differences between the interests of the various groups from which it wants to draw votes) risks losing support to a party that seeks to represent a more narrow set of interests or a few segments of society.

GOVERNMENT



As in **Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)** systems, **coalition government** is the norm under PR. The proportionality of results, combined with the tendency of modern societies to generate multi-party environments, makes it highly unlikely that one party will receive more than 50% of the vote.

Governments in PR systems are more likely to be multi-party coalitions, and larger coalitions are intrinsically more likely to collapse than smaller ones. But coalition governments in PR systems are not necessarily less stable than governments generated in other systems; many factors other than the electoral system are often at work when government is fragile. The Swiss party system is very fragmented, but its coalitions are among the

Table 4.7 Recent Election Results under List PR

Czech Republic Parliament 2006

Party	% of Votes	# of Seats	% of Seats
CDP	35.4	81	40.5
SDP	32.3	74	37.0
CBM	12.8	26	13.0
CDU/CPP	7.2	13	6.5
Grn	6.3	6	3.0
SNK-ED	2.1	0	0
Other	3.9	0	0
TOTAL	**100.0**	**200**	**100.0**

CDP = Civic Democracy Party
SDP = Social Democratic Party
CBM = Communist Party of Bohemia & Moravia
Grn = Green Party
CDU/CPP = Christian Democratic Union/ Czechoslovak People's Party
SNK-ED = European Democrats

Denmark Parliament 2005

Party	% of Votes	# of Seats	% of Seats
Lib	29.0	52	29.1
SD	25.9	47	26.3
DanPP	13.2	24	13.4
ConPP	10.3	18	10.1
SocLib	9.2	17	9.5
SocPP	6.0	11	6.1
RdGrn	3.4	6	3.4
Other	3.0	4	2.2
TOTAL	**100.0**	**179**	**100.1**

Lib = Liberals
SD = Social Democrats
DanPP = Danish People's Party
ConPP = Conservative People's Party
SocLib = Danish Social Liberal Party
SocPP = Socialist People's Party
RdGrn = Red-Green Alliance

Netherlands Tweede Kamer 2003

Party	% of Votes	# of Seats	% of Seats
ChrD	28.6	44	29.3
Lab	27.3	42	28.0
VVD	17.9	28	18.7
Soc	6.3	9	6.0
LPF	5.7	8	5.3
GrnL	5.1	8	5.3
Dm66	4.1	6	4.0
ChrU	2.1	3	2.0
PRF	1.6	2	1.3
Other	1.3	0	0
TOTAL	**100.0**	**150**	**99.9**

ChrD = Christian Democratic Appeal
Lab = Labour Party
VVD = People's Party for Freedom and Democracy
Soc = Socialist Party
LPF = List Pim Fortuyn
GrnL = Green Left
Dm66 = Democrats 66
ChrU = Christian Union
PRF = Political Reform Party

Peru Congress 2006

Party	% of Votes	# of Seats	% of Seats
UP	21.2	45	37.5
PAP	20.6	36	30.0
NatU	15.3	17	14.2
AF	13.1	13	10.8
CF	7.1	5	4.2
PP	4.1	2	1.7
NR	4.0	2	1.7
Other*	14.6	0	0
TOTAL	**100.0**	**120**	**100.1**

UP = Union for Peru
PAP = Peruvian Aprista Party
NatU = National Unity
AF = Alliance for the Future
CF = Center Front
PP = Peru Possible
NR=National Restoration
* includes 17 minor parties

Sweden Riksdag 2002

Party	% of Votes	# of Seats	% of Seats
SocD	39.8	144	41.3
Mod	15.2	55	15.8
Lib	13.3	48	13.8
ChrD	9.1	33	9.5
Left	8.3	30	8.6
Cntr	6.1	22	6.3
Grn	4.6	17	4.9
Other	3.6	0	0
TOTAL	**100.0**	**349**	**100.2**

SocD = Social Democrats
Mod = Moderate Party
Lib = Liberal Party
ChrD = Christian Democrats
Left = Left Party
Cntr = Centre Party
Grn = Green Party

Switzerland National Council 2003

Party	% of Votes	# of Seats	% of Seats
SVP	26.6	55	27.5
SocD	23.4	52	26.0
FDP	17.3	36	18.0
ChrD	14.4	28	14.0
Grn	7.4	13	6.5
EVP	2.3	3	1.5
Lib	2.2	4	2.0
Other*	6.4	9	4.5
TOTAL	**100.0**	**200**	**100.0**

SVP = Swiss People's Party
SocD = Social Democrats
FDP = Free Democratic Party
ChrD = Christian Democrats
Grn = Green Party
EVP = Evangelical People's Party
Lib = Liberal Party
* includes 8 minor parties

most stable governments anywhere. Minority coalitions are also a possibility under PR, as are long periods of successful single-party minority government, as demonstrated by the Swedish Social Democratic Party (which has been in government for 66 of the past 75 years, in coalition only some of that time).

EVALUATING LIST PR

Legitimacy

Of all the systems considered in this booklet, List PR might seem the least familiar to Ontario voters. The biggest difference with the current FPTP system is the use of multi-member districts, which provide little local **geographic representation**. If

List PR were adopted in Ontario, the sheer size of the multi-member districts that would be created would be a significant challenge. Some of Ontario's single-member districts are already very large. If they were combined into larger units like Sweden's, with an average of 11 members per district, Ontario would have about 10 ridings, one encompassing the whole of Northern Ontario. An alternative might be to vary the size of constituencies, with large urban ridings and smaller rural ridings, but the proportionality of the results would then vary widely across the province. Another option would be to raise the number of MPPs, to have more members per district without enlarging the geographic size of constituencies. Of course, this would increase the size and expenses of the legislature.

Voting with party lists would also be a departure from Ontario's practice, especially if it also allowed voters to express preferences for one or more candidates on the list, or to vote across party lists. On the other hand, experience from other jurisdictions suggests that people are quick to catch on to the opportunities that a new system presents to them.

Fairness of Representation

Like single-member districts, multi-member districts do well at **representation by population**, so long as there are only minor variations in the numbers of members per district. List PR produces highly proportional results for the parties – its defining feature. List PR also offers willing political parties the opportunity of promoting candidates from historically underrepresented segments of society. On the Inter-Parliamentary Union's ranking of countries with the highest proportions of female legislators, 15 of the top 20 countries employ a List PR system.

Voter Choice

The closed list that most List PR systems employ gives voters only one choice to make; they choose a party, and the rest is decided for them. However, where there is a free list, voters have as many votes as there are seats to be filled. They can choose from candidates of any party and can even stack votes with one candidate (in Switzerland and Luxembourg). The free list provides maximum voter choice.

Most PR systems offer a high degree of choice in a wider sense, because they often result in multi-party systems where voters can choose among many parties with a broad range of ideological perspectives. At the same time, the diversity of parties can lead to a ballot that might seem complex, especially to those who are accustomed to the relative simplicity of other voting systems such as Single-Member Plurality.

Effective Parties

Proportional representation systems allow more parties to win election to the legislature than do other systems. Effective thresholds are low; as noted, only about 6.7% of the vote is needed to win a seat in a 15-member district.

Where PR is well established, voters' attachments to specific parties are often very strong, and this has meant low **volatility**: relative stability in the levels of party support from one election to another. Parties' continuing ability to win seats may be as good a gauge of party effectiveness as any other. Still, winning the most seats or even a set percentage of seats may not be necessary in order for a party to represent its supporters' interests. Being strategically located within a party system where it can forge working relationships with other parties may be just as important. The notion that a proportional distribution is fair can be complemented by the idea that a proportional distribution forges a stronger relationship between political parties and their supporters: parties that are not effective will not remain in parliament.

The size of Switzerland's executive (Cabinet) is fixed by its constitution at seven members. From 1959 to 2003, this executive consisted of two members of the Free Democrats, two of the Social Democrats, two of the Christian Democrats, and one of the Swiss People's Party. After the 2003 election, the ratio was changed: the People's Party gained one executive seat and the Christian Democrats lost one seat.

Stable and Effective Government

In general, List PR has produced stable coalition governments. It is also true that many countries whose governments frequently collapse prematurely or resign have PR systems. But even in these countries, a basic level of predictability, if not stability, remains.

A premature end to the government in a PR system does not automatically lead to early elections, as it commonly would in a plurality or majority system.

Instead, negotiations to form another coalition may take place, and only if another government cannot be formed will the head of state dissolve the legislature and call elections. Two, three, or even more governments may form during the life of one parliament – not that this is typical. When one government succeeds another without an election, it is also possible, if not likely, that one or some of the coalition partners from the first government will participate in the second. It has even been known for the original coalition to re-form on the basis of a different distribution of the cabinet posts or a revised policy platform.

These scenarios indicate how coalition government can sometimes provide a considerable amount of continuity between governments. A history of coalition government may lead to a culture of compromise and consensus, and as a result, policy changes may be incremental rather than radical. In one view, this is a kind of stability that PR systems offer more readily than other systems; from another perspective, it is a source of inertia that limits the ability to make fundamental changes or to respond quickly and decisively to serious challenges.

Another concern with coalitions is the possibility for delay in forming a government after each election while the parties negotiate. These delays cause uncertainty and may be a source of instability, because no new policies can be implemented until the new government takes office.

Effective Parliament

The multi-party environments and coalition governments of PR (and MMP) systems tend to produce a more consensual style of parliamentary practice than the oppositional style that is characteristic of Westminster parliamentary government.

If coalitions are unstable or if party systems are overly fragmented – not the usual characteristics of PR systems – then parliaments will be less effective.

Voter Participation

Although voter participation under PR systems, as elsewhere, has been declining, it has also generally been higher than under plurality and majority systems. There are always exceptions to the general pattern; Switzerland, for example, has quite a low rate of voter turnout, but given the extraordinary stability of the Swiss election outcomes and the emphasis there on direct democracy (referendums and citizen initiatives), lower interest in parliamentary elections is not surprising. In many European PR systems, voter turnouts of 75% to 85% are not unusual. There are very few **wasted votes** in PR systems: almost every vote contributes to the overall configuration of seats in the legislature. For this reason, every vote matters to the parties, and the system gives them an incentive to work hard to attract, organize, and keep supporters.

Accountability

One concern expressed about all systems (including List PR) that produce coalition governments is that the voters cannot be sure which party or person is accountable for government policies. Voting in multi-member constituencies for closed party lists limits the ability of voters to hold individual representatives accountable; open or free lists are the exception rather than the rule. On the other hand, List PR is very responsive to any changes in party support, rewarding each party that attracts more votes and penalizing each one that loses votes.

The lines of accountability in these systems run principally through the political parties: party members may attempt to hold the parliamentary caucus accountable by means of party meetings and conventions, and to hold particular members accountable by voting to determine their place on the ballot. In general, party supporters play a much more active role in the period between elections in a PR system than in a typical plurality system. This is a part of the difference in culture that is associated with electoral systems. In a plurality system, accountability is thought of as a relationship between the government and the electorate at large. In a PR system, where government is a partnership between parties, it may be more useful to think of accountability as a relationship between each party's leaders and elected officials, on the one hand, and its general membership and supporters, on the other.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION FAMILY

Single Transferable Vote

Found in: Australia (Federal Senate), Malta, Republic of Ireland

A second type of proportional representation system with multi-member districts is known as **Single Transferable Vote (STV)**, used in the Republic of Ireland and in Malta. A form of STV was recommended by the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly to the B.C. electorate in 2005. Although a majority of B.C. residents supported the initiative in a referendum, the result did not reach the 60% threshold set by the government. Another referendum has been promised for 2009.

ELEMENTS OF STV

Element 1: District Magnitude



Each geographic **electoral district** elects more than one member, usually several, to the legislature. In most places, the number of representatives is proportionate to the population of the district. This ensures that each vote carries roughly the same weight. Ireland has three-member, four-member, and five-member districts; Malta uses five-member districts. With **district magnitudes** of this size, Ireland and Malta are able to achieve a degree of **proportionality** but generally not as much as in systems with more members per district.

Element 2: Electoral Formula

STV uses a variation of the **Droop quota** that is used in some List PR electoral systems. It distributes the seats in the multi-member constituencies in a proportional manner.

Element 3: Ballot Type

The key to this system is the use of a single transferable vote (STV) ballot, a type of **ordinal ballot** where the voter may rank the candidates running in the district, regardless of party. This is the same type of ballot that is used in the **Alternative Vote (AV)** system in Australia, with two differences. First, STV has **multi-member districts**, so the ballot is determining more than one winner; and second, STV employs **optional preferential voting** – voters may choose to rank as few or as many candidates as they wish.

Candidate A	5
Candidate B	2
Candidate C	3
Candidate D	1
Candidate E	4

HOW IT WORKS

Determining who wins the seats under STV begins with a **modified Droop quota**, which is calculated by dividing the votes by the number of seats plus 1, then adding 1: for example, in a three-seat district with 8000 votes, the quota is 8000 ÷ (3 + 1), which comes to 2000, and with the extra 1 vote, 2001.

In Count 1, all ballots are allocated to the candidates on the basis of the first preference marked on each, and the total is compared with the quota. At this stage there may or may not be candidates who have received the full quota of votes. Any candidate who has reached the quota is declared elected.

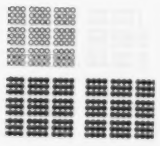
Generally, a candidate who is elected has some surplus votes, a quantity of votes beyond the quota necessary to win the seat. A unique feature of STV is that these **surplus votes** are counted and transferred to other candidates, according to the next preferences marked on the surplus ballots.

If no candidate reaches the quota or if not enough candidates are elected to fill all the seats, the candidate with the fewest first-preference ballots is eliminated. All of this candidate's ballots are then redistributed to the second-preference candidates marked on them for the next count. At the same stage, election officials will calculate whether there are candidates whose totals are so small that transferring their votes would make no appreciable difference to any other candidate. Such candidates, too, are eliminated, and their ballots are redistributed.

The same process – electing candidates whose totals reach the quota, transferring the winners' surplus votes, eliminating the candidate with the lowest total in each round, and eliminating candidates with too few votes to affect the outcome – continues for as many counts as necessary until the seats are filled. Towards the end, no candidate may be able to accumulate enough votes to reach the quota, and the remaining seats will go to those with the highest totals

ELECTION RESULTS UNDER STV

Because there are only two countries (Ireland and Malta) that use this system to elect their national governments, it can be difficult to make generalizations about how STV works. Nonetheless, STV is designed to produce more proportionate results than **plurality** or **majority** systems, but greater proportionality can be achieved only with **district magnitudes** greater than those used in Ireland and Malta. In Australia, where STV is used in certain subnational jurisdictions and to elect the senate, election results are more proportional because the district magnitudes are larger.



Ireland's districts have three, four, or five seats, and the proportion of ridings with three members (currently 38%) is growing. When a five-member riding sees an increase in population, it is simpler to split it into two three-member ridings than to adjust boundaries with adjacent ridings or take other steps to retain the five seats. Maltese districts are uniform at five members each.

When a modified Droop quota ([Votes ÷ (Seats+1)] + 1) is used, the **effective threshold** for a three-member district is 25% (plus one vote), for a four-member district, 20% (plus one vote), and for a five-member district, 16.7% (plus one vote). Results in Ireland and Malta tend, therefore, to be semi-proportional. **Manufactured majorities** are not unusual, and in Malta's case, a special provision has been devised to counteract the system's potential to produce **false winners**.

Under STV, a candidate with fewer initial votes has a good chance of being elected because of the possibility of receiving transferred votes. Table 4.8 demonstrates this phenomenon. In this Irish district, the quota was 9961 votes. Only five counts were needed to settle the four seats, making this one of the less complicated constituencies in the 2002 election.

After the initial count of first preferences, Whelan had too few votes to make a difference to any other candidate, and Corley was eliminated for having the lowest total among the others. All their ballots were transferred together to Count 2. J. Breen then had enough votes to be elected. J. Breen's surplus and all the votes of Meaney, the next-lowest, were transferred to Count 3. The next-lowest was eliminated in each of the next two counts, and the transfer of those votes elected P. Breen. Three candidates were then left for two seats. Although none of the three reached the quota, the two with the highest vote totals at this point were elected. Daly was not elected although he had received more initial votes than P. Breen.

In fact, P. Breen, who finished fifth in Count 1 and stayed fifth through four counts, ended up with the most votes of all candidates after Count 5, largely on the strength of transfers from Quinn, who was eliminated after Count 4. Quinn, in turn, had received a large boost when Carey was eliminated after Count 3, but not enough to overtake Daly. P. Breen, Quinn, and Carey were candidates for the Fine Gael Party; this result shows the cascading effect possible when a party has more than one candidate. Most of Carey's vote (73% of it) split between the two remaining Fine Gael candidates, and then most of Quinn's vote (66% of it) went to P. Breen.

By the time Quinn's votes put P. Breen over the quota, the majority of the ballots that ended up with Breen did not rank him as the voter's first choice. Many of those voters ranked him as their third or lower choice. This feature of STV ensures that the preferences of voters whose initial candidates are eliminated are considered, but it appears to give a disproportionate influence to voters who voted first for the candidates who were, at the end of the day, the least popular.

Table 4.8 STV Election in Clare District, Ireland, 2002

Clare District has four seats. The quota in this election was 9961 votes. Quota = (Votes ÷ [Seats+1]) + 1

Candidate	Party	Count 1	Transfer of votes from Corley and Whelan Count 2	Transfer of votes from Meaney and surplus votes from J Breen Count 3	Transfer of votes from Carey Count 4	Transfer of votes from Quinn Count 5	Status
J Breen	Independent	9,721	*+333* 10,054	-93 9,961	9,961	9,961	Elected (made quota)
P Breen	Fine Gael	4,541	*+160* 4,701	*+564* 5,265	*+1,669* 6,934	*+4,462* 11,396	Elected (made quota)
T Killeen	Fianna Fáil	8,130	*+122* 8,252	*+388* 8,640	*+424* 9,064	*+418* 9,482	Elected
S de Valera	Fianna Fáil	7,755	*+111* 7,866	*+598* 8,464	*+355* 8,819	*+551* 9,370	Elected
B Daly	Fianna Fáil	6,717	*+69* 6,786	*+128* 6,914	*+172* 7,086	*+597* 7,683	Not Elected
M Quinn	Fine Gael	4,124	*+225* 4,349	*+685* 5,034	*+1,692* 6,726	*-6,726*	Eliminated
D Carey	Fine Gael	4,015	*+212* 4,227	*+364* 4,591	*-4,591*		Eliminated
B Meaney	Green	2,903	*+605* 3,508	*-3,508*			Eliminated
C Corley	Labour	1,720	*-1,720*				Eliminated
D Whelan	Christian Solidarity	176	*-176*				Eliminated

Note: In each count, the total of votes transferred from elected or eliminated candidates (indicated by minus signs) is greater than the total of their distributions to other candidates (plus signs). Not all surplus or transferred ballots can be carried forward, because if a voter did not give every candidate a preference ranking, the ballot is removed from the counting once all the candidates that were ranked are elected or eliminated.

PARTY SYSTEMS



Ireland has evolved from a **two-party system** to an environment in which one party has dominated (Fianna Fáil), facing a fragmented set of opposition parties. The last two elections produced lower support for the top three parties and increases for the Greens and Sinn Fein. Ireland also elects a high number of independent candidates. Some say that this is a unique characteristic of STV, but it may be more a product of the local nature of Irish politics. Malta has a deeply entrenched two-party system; the last time a third party won a seat was in 1962.

GOVERNMENT



One-party dominance in Ireland has meant that of the 23 parliaments since 1932, Fianna Fáil has been in government (alone or in coalition) for all but six, and during one of these (the 27th Dáil, 1992-97), it led the governing coalition for the first two years. Malta, with its classic two-party system, has had single-party **majority governments** since 1955. Because of the ability of the system to generate false winners, a provision was put in place in Malta that ensures the party that finishes with the higher number of first preference votes also has a majority of seats. This was last required in 1996.

Table 4.9 Election Results under STV

Ireland
Dáil Éireann, 2002

Party	% of Vote (1st Preferences)	Seats	% of Seats
Fianna Fáil	41.5	81	48.8
Fine Gail	22.5	31	18.7
Labour	10.8	20	12.0
Sinn Féin	6.5	5	3.0
Progressive Democrats	4.0	8	4.8
Green	3.8	6	3.6
Socialist	0.8	1	0.6
Independents	9.5	13	7.8
(Speaker)		1	0.6
TOTAL	**99.4**	**166**	**99.9**

Malta
House of Representatives, 1996 – 2003

Party	% Votes (1st Preferences)	Seats	% of Seats
1996			
Nationalist	47.8	34	49.3
Malta Labour	50.7	35*	50.7
TOTAL	**98.5**	**69**	**100**
1998			
Nationalist	51.8	35	53.8
Malta Labour	47.0	30	46.2
TOTAL	**98.8**	**65**	**100**
2003			
Nationalist	51.8	35	53.8
Malta Labour	47.5	30	46.2
TOTAL	**99.3**	**65**	**100**

* The Malta Labour Party received a 4-seat bonus for finishing with the higher number of 1st preference votes.

EVALUATING STV

Like List PR, STV employs multi-member districts, but with fewer members per district than in List PR. This may allow some sense of local geographic representation to be retained. STV puts a premium on having a strong local base in the district. In Ireland, this has been said to place an emphasis on local politics to the detriment of national concerns. The localism of Irish politics is fed in part by the small geographic size of the districts, and in part by an electoral system in which members of the same party compete against each other.

It is difficult to assess how a system that operates in small ridings, both geographically and demographically, might function in a province like Ontario with ridings that are large by both measures. Increasing the number of MPPs, to have more members per district without making constituencies larger geographically, might be necessary to make STV work. Of course, this would increase the cost of operating the legislature.

Voting with an STV ballot might prove challenging to Ontario voters who are used to making one mark on their ballot, but the challenge could be welcome to many. Making sense of the election results under STV and becoming accustomed to the delays in results might be more difficult.

STV produces a more proportional result than plurality and majority systems. However, British Columbia's proposed STV system would have constituencies ranging from two to seven seats, and only at the upper end of this range could consistently proportional results be expected. **Representation by population** is possible with multi-member districts of varying size, so long as the ratios of population to seats are consistent. However, if constituency sizes vary considerably within a proportional representation system, then the effective threshold (the level a party needs to gain seats) will also vary, and this means that the votes of those who support smaller parties will carry much more weight in ridings with a lower threshold than in small districts with a high threshold.

Parties cannot as easily promote candidates from historically underrepresented segments of society in STV systems as in List PR systems, where, for example, parties can place such candidates at the top of party lists. On the Inter-Parliamentary Union's list ranking countries with the highest proportions of female legislators, Ireland is tied for 78th place, and Malta is tied for 100th. It is unclear however to what extent these fairly low rankings are the result of the STV system or of the political attitudes and beliefs in these two countries.

STV is highly regarded for the degree of voter choice that it provides. The ordinal ballot allows voters to express preferences about each candidate and, at the same time, about each party.

The STV system is undoubtedly complex, but its complexity allows for voters' preferences to be expressed in-depth. Most often a majority of voters only have their first preferences considered. In some cases, a voter who has marked a ballot all the way down to the fifth or sixth preference can have a say in the outcome, even if his or her first, second, third or even fourth choices are eliminated. The ballot could be transferred and used to elect another member. Only a small proportion of the voters who take full advantage of the preferential ballot will see their choices have no influence.

Voter turnout in Ireland is relatively low, closer to the rates experienced in plurality systems than to the rates in List PR and MMP systems; it declined from 76.6% in 1973 to 62.6% in 2002. In Malta, turnout in national elections has averaged over 95% since 1976, perhaps reflecting the very competitive two-party races there.

In Single-Member Plurality systems, it is relatively clear who is accountable at the local level, because there is only one member in each district. In STV or any system with multi-member districts, it is comparatively difficult to hold individual representatives accountable. However, STV has strong local accountability when compared with, for example, PR systems with **closed lists**, which do not give voters the opportunity to vote for individual candidates. STV also encourages representatives to work hard to please their constituents because a slight change in ranking could have a profound impact on who is elected.

CHAPTER 5 MIXED FAMILY

Mixed Member Proportional

Found in: Bolivia, Germany, Hungary, Lesotho, Mexico, New Zealand, Venezuela, and other countries

The **Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)** system is used in Germany (the first country to use MMP, beginning in 1949 in the former West Germany), New Zealand (where voters chose it as a replacement for FPTP in 1993), and a number of other countries in Europe and South America. One of the newer electoral systems, it endeavours to combine **proportionality** with the geographical representation provided by single-member districts.

Element 1: District Magnitude



MMP systems have two types of **electoral districts** organized into two tiers of elected representatives.



Each electoral district in the first tier elects one member to the legislature (i.e. the **district magnitude** is one). Within a range of variation (to take account of geographical distances) each district contains roughly the same population. This is to ensure that each vote carries roughly the same weight.

A second tier of proportional, at-large seats is drawn from a single national district or a number of regional districts. In this tier the **district magnitude** is always greater than one.

Element 2: Electoral Formula



Elections for the local **constituency seats** are usually FPTP contests in which the **plurality formula** determines the winning candidate to be the one with more votes than any other candidate. In Hungary, however, constituency seats are determined by the **majority formula**, using the **Two-Round System (TRS)**.

Another vote, the **party vote**, determines the seat share of each party. The at-large **second-tier seats** are distributed in such a way that when they are added to the constituency seats, each party's seat total in the legislature matches as closely as possible its share of the party vote. These at-large seats will usually be filled from the party's list of candidates by those individuals who did not win a seat in the first tier.

Candidate A	•	⊗	Party A
Candidate B	•	•	Party B
Candidate C	•	•	Party C
Candidate D	⊗	•	Party D
Candidate E	•	•	Party E

Element 3: Ballot Type

In MMP, voters receive a **double ballot**. On one side, they choose from a list of candidates seeking to represent their local constituency. On the other side, they choose from a list of political parties that are seeking representation in the legislature. Both sides are **categorical (exclusive) ballots**. One important aspect of the double ballot is that it allows voters to choose a local candidate while also supporting a different party if they wish. The party vote is the one that will be used to determine the final composition of the legislature.

HOW IT WORKS

MMP is a two-tier system combining seats representing single-member districts (as in FPTP

Table 5.1 Seats in MMP Legislatures

Country	1st Tier Seats (single-member districts)	2nd Tier Seats (national or regional districts)	Total Seats
Bolivia	68 (52%)	62 (48%)	130
Germany	299 (50%)	299 (50%)	598
Hungary	176 (46%)	210 (54%)	386
Mexico	300 (60%)	200 (40%)	500
New Zealand	69 (57%)	52 (43%)	121

Terms in bold are defined in the Glossary

or TRS) with a tier of seats that are distributed proportionally to compensate for any **seat bonuses** or **deficits** generated by the local races (see Table 5.1). Germany elects 50% of its seats in single-member districts (constituency seats) and 50% of its seats from party lists (at-large or **proportional seats**). Citizens vote twice on the same ballot: once for the local candidate, and a second time for the political party. The at-large seats are distributed in such a way that each party receives a share of seats that is roughly equal to its overall share of the party vote.

The defining element of MMP is the relationship of the second tier of proportional seats to the constituency seats. If the proportions among the parties' totals of constituency seats do not match the proportions of the party vote, the second-tier seats are divided to adjust the overall results accordingly. For this reason, the second-tier seats in an MMP system are called **adjustment** or **compensatory** seats. The two tiers are reconciled in the following way:

1) Each party's share of the party vote is used to determine the overall number of seats in the legislature to which it is entitled.

2) The number of seats the party's candidates have won at the local level is subtracted from its entitlement.

3) The remainder is the number of at-large proportional seats the party will receive.

As Table 5.2 shows, the parties that get a seat bonus in local FPTP contests receive a correspondingly diminished share of the second-tier seats, while those parties that are discounted or shut out by the FPTP contests are compensated with a larger share of the second-tier seats.

Geographical Allocation of Proportional Seats

MMP systems have various ways of allocating the at-large seats, whose members do not represent local districts. In New Zealand, for example, these second-tier seats are divided up according to the national party vote totals and then filled from national lists prepared by each party. In Germany, the proportional seats are calculated on the basis of the national party vote totals but allocated on a provincial basis using lists prepared by each party's provincial wing.

Filling the Proportional Seats

On the party vote side of the ballot, each party presents a list of all its candidates (nationally, provincially, or regionally) in an order that the party has determined. Once the party's number of proportional seats has been calculated, they will be filled by those candidates who have not won seats in local constituencies, starting at the top of the list and working down. This normally means that the party's most favoured candidates (such as the party leader and potential cabinet ministers) get a double chance of gaining seats. But a party could instead place at the top of its list those candidates less likely to win constituency seats, or candidates from segments of society that are typically underrepresented.

Table 5.2 MMP Election Results

Party	% of Party Vote	Local Seats Won (1st Tier)	Adjustment Seats (2nd Tier)	Total Seats	% of Seats in Legislature
Party A	30	66	24	90	**30**
Party B	35	82	23	105	**35**
Party C	25	2	73	75	**25**
Party D	10	0	30	30	**10**
TOTAL	**100**	150	150	300	**100**

In this hypothetical 300-seat legislature, 150 seats are won in local constituencies and 150 seats are allocated in proportion to the party vote.

Formal Thresholds

A large pool of proportional seats, particularly if they are allocated on a national basis, makes it possible for a party to qualify for seats with a very small percentage of the overall party vote. In Germany, each of the 299 proportional seats represents 0.17% of the vote; in New Zealand, each of the 52 proportional seats represents 0.83% of the vote. In order to prevent a proliferation of very

small parties, many systems use a **formal** (legal) **threshold** that requires parties to obtain a certain percentage of the party vote in order to qualify for adjustment seats. Germany's **double threshold** requires a party to obtain 5% of the national vote or win 3 constituency seats to qualify. In 1990, in the first election after reunification, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), largely based in the former East Germany, won only 4.4% of the vote, but by winning 4 constituency seats it became eligible for 26 proportional seats, bringing its total to 30. In the 2002 election, this party won 4.0% of the vote, but only 2 constituency seats. Failing to cross either threshold, it did not receive proportional seats.

In New Zealand, the double threshold is 5% of the national vote or one constituency seat. The one-seat minimum is an especially low barrier for a party to cross. A larger party might even consider sacrificing one of its own seats to assist a minor party when it needs the smaller party's support in the legislature. Suppose Party A expects to win 59 seats in a 120-seat legislature. It would need the support of a party with only 2 seats in order to gain control of the government. On the eve of the election, Party B, which would be a compatible partner, is polling 4.8% of the vote, which would leave it short of qualifying for proportional seats. If Party A could convince its supporters in just one riding to vote for Party B, a win there for Party B would give it as many as 5 proportional seats, enough to give parties A and B a comfortable majority together.

Table 5.3 Overhang Seats

Party	% of Party Vote	Local Seats Won	Appropriate Seat Total	Adjustment Seats	Total Seats
Party A	34.1	22	20	0	22
Party B	24.9	6	15	9	15
Party C	19.5	2	12	10	12
Party D	11.5	0	7	7	7
Party E	10.0	0	6	6	6
TOTAL	100	30	60	32	62

In this hypothetical 60-seat *Land*, 30 seats are won in local constituencies and 30 seats are allocated in proportion to the party vote.

Overhang Seats

Germany allocates its proportional seats within its provinces, called *Länder*. Because support for some parties is concentrated in certain *Länder*, a party can win more constituency seats than the overall share to which it is entitled. In the German system, the parties retain any such seats – called **overhang seats** – and the size of the legislature is temporarily increased. Without the increase, the other parties would not be able to receive the shares of proportional seats to which their vote shares entitle them.

In the example in Table 5.3, Party A has won 22 of 30 local constituency seats. With only 34.1% of the party vote, however, its appropriate seat total would be 20. The German system allows Party A to keep the bonus as 2 overhang seats. In the recent German election, there were 16 overhang seats, increasing the size of the legislature from 598 seats to 614.

The 2005 election in New Zealand was the first to produce an overhang seat in that country. Table 5.4 shows that the Maori Party attracted 2.1% of the vote, which would normally entitle a party (if it

---

In the 2005 New Zealand election, closely contested between the Labour Party and the National Party, there was a chance that a potential coalition partner for the Nationals, a liberal party called ACT, would not cross either threshold for getting proportional seats. National Party leader Don Brash rejected the idea that his supporters should work to elect ACT's leader, Rodney Hide, the party's best hope to win a seat but whom polls showed trailing the National candidate. The Labour Party, fearing that National supporters might nonetheless choose to support Hide, urged its own voters to vote for the National Party candidate. In the end, Hide won the seat, but because ACT's total vote was only 1.5%, it received only one proportional seat.

Table 5.4 Election Results in New Zealand

House of Representatives, 2005

	SEATS				
Party	% of Party Vote	Local Seats	Adjustment Seats	Total	Share of Total Seats %
Lab	41.1	31	19	50	41.3
Nat	39.1	31	17	48	39.7
NZF	5.7	0	7	7	5.8
Grn	5.3	0	6	6	5.0
Maori	2.1	4	0	4	3.3
UFNZ	2.7	1	2	3	2.5
ACT	1.5	1	1	2	1.7
Prog	1.2	1	0	1	0.8
Other	1.3	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	100.0	69*	52	121	100.1

* includes one overhang seat

Lab = Labour Party
Nat = National Party
Grn = Green Party,
Maori = Maori Party
ACT = ACT Party,
Prog = Progressive
NZF = New Zealand First
UFNZ = United Future New Zealand

Table 5.5 Election Results in Germany

Bundestag, 2002

	Constituency		Proportional		Total	
Party	% of Vote	Local Seats	% of Vote	Adjustment Seats	Seats	Share of Seats %
SPD	41.9	171	38.5	80	251	41.6
CDU/CSU	41.0	125	38.5	123	248	41.1
A90/Grn	5.6	1	8.6	54	55	9.1
FDP	3.6	0	7.3	47	47	7.8
PDS	4.4	2	4.0	0	2	0.3
Other	3.5	0	3.1	0	0	0
TOTAL	100.0	299	100.0	304*	603	99.9

*Includes 5 overhang seats.

Bundestag, 2005

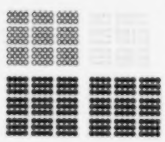
	Constituency		Proportional		Total	
Party	% of Vote	Local Seats	% of Vote	Adjustment Seats	Seats	Share of Seats %
CDU/CSU	40.8	150	35.2	76	226	36.8
SPD	38.4	145	34.2	77	222	36.2
FDP	4.7	0	9.8	61	61	9.9
Left	8.0	3	8.7	51	54	8.8
A90/Grn	5.4	1	8.1	50	51	8.3
Other	2.7	0	4.0	0	0	0
TOTAL	100	299	100	315*	614	100.0

*Includes 16 overhang seats.

CDU/CSU = Christian Democratic Union/ Christian Social Union
SPD = Social Democratic Party
FDP = Free Democratic Party
A90/Grn = Alliance 90/Green Party
Left = Left Party
PDS = Party of Democratic Socialism

qualifies by winning at least 1 seat) to a total of 3 seats. The Maori Party won 4 constituency seats, giving it 1 overhang seat and temporarily increasing the size of the New Zealand legislature to 121 seats.

ELECTION RESULTS UNDER MMP



MMP systems such as those in Germany and New Zealand typically produce proportional legislatures. But some **disproportionality** is introduced by votes for parties that do not reach the threshold to qualify for proportional seats (**wasted votes**).

In 2005, 4% of German voters supported parties that did not reach the threshold, an amount equivalent to 24 seats in the legislature (see Table 5.5). Those seats were distributed to all the qualifying parties in proportion to their shares of the party vote total, giving each party a small seat bonus. Parties with overhang seats ended up with additional bonuses. The bonuses of 1.6% for the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union and 2.0% for the Social Democratic Party reflect mostly their overhang seats. In the previous election, in 2002, the Party of Democratic Socialism and "Other" parties failed to qualify for proportional seats, so 6.8% of the party vote (3.7% for the PDS, and 3.1% for "Other") was shared as a bonus by the other four parties. There were fewer overhang seats in that year to influence the distribution.

New Zealand's 2005 result (Table 5.4) illustrates other features of MMP. Perhaps most significant is the ability the system gives to small parties like New Zealand First (NZF) and the Greens to gain seats without securing either a plurality or a majority in any district. Parties that attract a portion of the vote in many ridings, amounting to 5% overall, can obtain representation entirely from the proportional seats. By the same token, with New Zealand's low alternative threshold of winning one constituency seat, small parties with a single seat won locally but considerably less than 5% of the vote can secure additional seats in the proportional allocation.

PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS



MMP, like other proportional systems, supports **multi-party systems**. MMP is efficient in translating vote shares into seat shares, and the formal thresholds are the only effective barriers that keep **electoral parties** (those receiving votes) from becoming **parliamentary parties** (those winning seats).

In Germany, the party system has shown considerable stability. Since the end of World War II, Germany has been led by either a strong party on the left (the Social Democratic Party) or a strong party group on the right (the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union). During this time only one other smaller party (the Free Democratic Party) has had a regular presence. More recently, two other small parties (the Green Party and

Table 5.6 New Zealand Elections under FPTP and MMP

House of Representatives, 1993 (FPTP)

Party	% of Vote	Seats	Share of Seats
Nat	35.1	50	50.5
Lab	34.7	45	45.5
All	18.2	2	2.0
NZF	8.4	2	2.0
Other	3.6	0	0
TOTAL	**100.0**	**99**	**100.0**

Lab = Labour Party
Nat = National Party
NZF = New Zealand First
CC= Christian Coalition
All = Alliance
ACT = ACT Party
ALC = Aotearoa Legalise Cannabis
United = United New Zealand

House of Representatives, 1996 (MMP)

Party	% of Party Vote	SEATS Local	SEATS Adjustment	SEATS Total	Share of total seats %
Lab	28.2	26	11	37	30.8
Nat	33.8	30	14	44	36.7
NZF	13.4	6	11	17	14.2
All	10.1	1	12	13	10.8
ACT	6.1	1	7	8	6.7
CC	4.3	0	0	0	0
United	0.9	1	0	1	0.8
ALC	1.7	0	0	0	0
Other	1.6	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**100.1**	**65***	**55***	**120**	**100.0**

*Since 1996 New Zealand has changed 4 seats from adjustment seats to local seats.

Alliance 90) have attained representation in the Bundestag (thanks, in part, to their decision to work together), but their success has been sporadic. Germany's system has been accommodating to new parties, when social and political forces have promoted them; in the 2005 election, the combined vote share of the two largest parties fell below 70% for the first time.

New Zealand has held only four elections under the MMP system, and it may be too soon to draw firm conclusions about its effects on the party system. In the first election, in 1996, New Zealand's party system expanded in two ways: first, there was a small increase in the number of electoral parties, and second, there was a considerable increase in the number of parties (five) winning more than 5% of the seats (see Table 5.6).

One party that prospered initially under the new system was the Alliance, which won only 2 seats in 1993 under FPTP with more than 18% of the vote, but in the first MMP election, with only 10.1% of the party vote, won 12 seats. In the 1999 election, the Green Party, which had been part of the Alliance, ran on its own and secured 6 seats, while what remained of the Alliance managed to win 9 seats.

In 1996 the two parties that have dominated New Zealand politics, the Labour Party and the National Party, received just over 62% of the party vote and 67.5% of the seats. By the 2005 election (Table 5.4), there were eight parties in the legislature; the two large parties and six small parties, with nothing in between. The top two parties attracted just over 80% of the votes and won the same proportion of seats.

GOVERNMENT

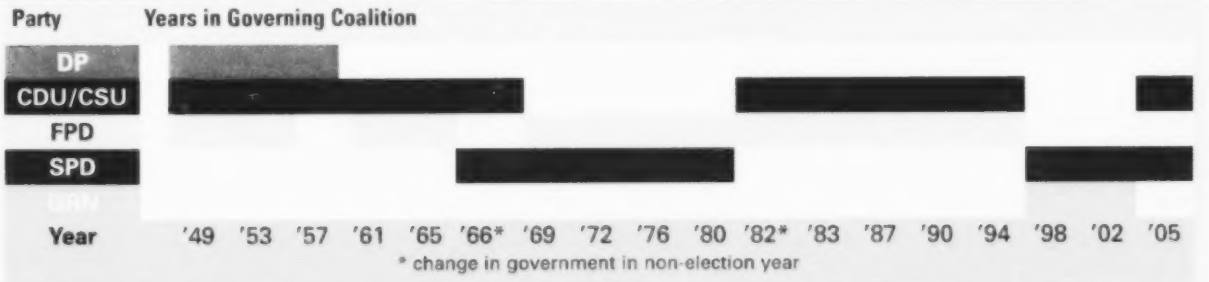


In MMP systems, **coalition government** is the norm. The proportionality of results, combined with the tendency of modern societies to generate multi-party environments, makes it extremely unlikely that one party will receive more than 50% of the vote. In established MMP systems, including Germany's, coalition governments are usually composed of two or three parties and typically serve their full terms.

Germany provides an excellent example of the way coalition government may provide continuity (see Figure 5.1). Germany has had 16 elections under MMP since 1949, each returning a legislature led by a majority coalition. Twice, in 1966 and in 1982, the junior coalition partner (the FDP) withdrew its support of the government, causing a new coalition to form. Only once, after the 1998 election, did Germany change governments without at least one party from the previous administration becoming a partner in the new coalition.

In New Zealand, minority coalitions have been equally successful. All governments following the four elections held under MMP have been coalitions (see Table 5.7). After the 1996 election, the coalition between the National and New Zealand First parties held a bare majority of the 120 seats. Within two years, the defection of members from New Zealand First reduced the coalition to a minority position. The three succeeding Labour-led governments have also been minority coalitions, and none has been forced to an early exit.

Figure 5.1 Coalition Governments in Germany



DP= German Party
CDU/CSU = Christian Democratic Union/ Christian Social Union
FDP = Free Democratic Party
SPD = Social Democratic Party
GRN = Green Party

Table 5.7 Coalition Governments in New Zealand

	Seats Held by Coalition Partners		Subtotal	Seats Held by Informal Partners			Subtotal	Total
1996	National	NZ First		-	-			
	44	17	61	-	-	-	-	61
1999	Labour	Alliance		Green	-	-		
	49	10	59	6	-	-	6	65
2002	Labour	Progressive		UF	-	-		
	52	2	54	7	-	-	7	61
2005	Labour	Progressive		NZ First	UF	Green		
	50	1	51	7	3	6	16	67

Note: In New Zealand's 120-seat legislature a majority is 61 seats. The 2005 election produced one overhang seat for a total of 121 seats.

UF = United Future Party NZ First = New Zealand First

It is possible for a **minority government**, whether single-party or coalition, to survive so long as it can attract votes from other parties, either on an issue-by-issue basis or through a more formal partnership. After the 1999 New Zealand election, the Green Party agreed to support the Labour-Alliance government without actually joining the coalition. When Labour and the Greens disagreed on ending a moratorium on genetic engineering, Labour had to find new support after the 2002 election. The junior coalition partner in the 2002-05 parliament was the Progressive Party, formerly part of the Alliance, which had fallen apart before the 2002 election. In addition, the government counted on the support of the United Future Party, which agreed to vote with the government on the crucial **confidence** and **supply** motions; if these motions fail, the government must resign. After the 2005 election, with the coalition further diminished, the support of New Zealand First and United Future on confidence and supply motions was secured by making the leader of each party a minister sitting outside the **Cabinet**. The Green Party also agreed to support the government on matters of confidence and supply, in return for policy concessions.

EVALUATING MMP

Legitimacy

Constituency races in MMP systems differ little from FPTP single-member contests, and would be very familiar to Ontario voters. The main difference from the voters' perspective is that voting for a local candidate does not entail a corresponding commitment to the candidate's party. Voters register their party preference with a second vote on the other half of the double ballot. The adoption of a mixed system such as MMP in former FPTP jurisdictions such as New Zealand may reflect a need for attachment to single-member districts that is not met by other proportional representation systems. But problems can arise when elected representatives have two types of mandates, particularly if their respective roles are not clear.

Adopting MMP would require deciding whether to enlarge the legislature to add a tier of proportional seats, or to use a portion of the existing seats for the second tier. With the latter option, there would be fewer single-member districts, each of which would be larger than the existing ones. Bigger districts may be a challenge in a jurisdiction such as Ontario, where many ridings already have large populations and some are enormous geographically.

Fairness of Representation

MMP is very strong at producing proportional results for the parties. It also offers willing parties the opportunity of boosting candidates from historically underrepresented segments of society by ranking them more highly on the party lists. New Zealand ranks 15th and Germany ranks 16th on the Inter-Parliamentary Union's list of countries with the highest proportions of female legislators.

Voter Choice

The double ballot provides an opportunity for **vote splitting**: citizens may choose an individual candidate from one party while endorsing another party. In the 2005 German elections, more citizens supported

candidates of the two largest parties in the constituency races than voted for these parties directly in the party vote; the opposite pattern was true for the smaller three parties. This suggests that a fair amount of **strategic voting** took place. Green Party supporters, for example, might have chosen to vote for the Social Democratic candidate in a close constituency race with the Christian Democratic candidate. Many Christian Democratic supporters apparently attempted to boost the results of the FDP, a traditional coalition ally. In general, the experiences of Germany and New Zealand indicate that MMP affords voters a range of ideological perspectives within manageable multi-party systems.

The double ballot is uncomplicated and fairly easy for voters to use, and the relationship between the votes cast and the outcome is relatively transparent. In each constituency, the winner is simply the candidate with the most votes, and the overall distribution of seats reflects the proportions of support for the various parties. What may be less clear to voters is the functioning of the mechanism that reconciles the constituency results with the national results.

Effective Parties

As noted earlier, the character of the multi-party system that is supported by MMP is partly dependent on the nature of the formal threshold for participation in the allocation of proportional seats. Germany's threshold of 5% or 3 constituency seats seems to have maintained a stable multi-party system, allowing the emergence of new parties but shutting out very small parties and extremist factions. New Zealand's threshold of 5% or 1 constituency seat has allowed a greater number of small parties and a less stable party system than Germany's, outside of the two largest parties that have traditionally dominated the country's politics. Like all systems that have a low threshold, formal or otherwise, MMP can give rise to concerns about very small parties having a disproportionate weight in the legislature and in the government.

In Germany, voters' attachments to specific parties appear to be fairly strong, and this has meant low **volatility** – relative stability in the levels of party support from one election to another. In its first four elections under MMP, New Zealand has experienced mixed results: Labour has maintained a stable, almost fixed share of the electorate, while support for the National Party has been much more volatile.

MMP, like other proportional systems, may undermine regional parties and regionalism within parties in two ways. First, adjustment seats will counteract the seat bonuses that regional concentrations may produce. Second, parties are more likely to receive representation in all regions in proportion to their support, and this will provide a counterbalance to any temptation to campaign strategically in some regions and not others.

Stable and Effective Government

In Germany and New Zealand, MMP has provided stable multi-party coalition governments. New Zealand has had no premature elections caused by defeat of the government or the collapse of a coalition, and no changes of government between elections. In Germany, the collapse of a government and the installation of another between elections has happened only twice. German stability is aided by a constitutional provision that requires a "constructive" vote of non-confidence to defeat a government: opponents must not simply vote down the existing government but must assemble the votes to support an alternative administration.

As the examples of Germany and New Zealand demonstrate, reinforced by examples of coalition government in other countries with other electoral systems, coalitions are not inherently unstable. Certain types of coalitions (such as those with numerous parties, or with parties that share few positions – the famously unstable coalitions of Italy met both these conditions) are more unstable than others.

The strong probability that these governments will serve out their full terms associates MMP with stable government, offering some measure of predictability to those who are affected by government policy-making. Moreover, the control of the policy agenda that the electoral system provides is as much of a guarantee as possible. Because coalition governments must begin by negotiating an agreement on major policy directions, they may actually be better able to govern effectively once they take office. However, it may take a significant amount of time to form a coalition after an election. These delays may be a source of instability, because there is uncertainty about who

is responsible for governance.

A second element of stability is the likelihood of continuity between governments. The coalition governments generated under MMP have been characterized by continuity. One consequence of such a history is that a habit of compromise and consensus may develop. Policy changes, as a result, are more likely to be incremental rather than wholesale. Whether this pattern is welcome or a source of frustration depends on one's perspective and on context. Continuity could mean stability for some stakeholders; it could impede what others might view as urgent reforms.

Effective Parliament

The multi-party environments and coalition governments of MMP systems tend to produce a more consensual style of parliamentary practice than the oppositional style that is characteristic of Westminster parliamentary government. This is reflected in the different seating arrangements: Westminster parliaments place government and opposition parties opposite each other in long rows of facing seats. The typical consensual "European" parliament places all the parties beside one another in a semicircle facing the Speaker or presiding officer of the assembly. When the decision was made to introduce MMP in New Zealand, a parliamentary committee investigated the changes to parliamentary procedure and practices that would be required to accommodate the very different legislature that was likely to result from the new system.

Voter Participation

Although participation has generally been declining in MMP systems, as elsewhere, it remains higher than in plurality and majority systems without compulsory voting. The turnout in Germany over the past five general elections stayed in the range of 78% to 82%, averaging 79.2%. New Zealand's average over the past four elections was 82.8%; participation declined from 88% in 1996 to 77% in 2002, before rebounding to 81% in 2005. MMP results in wasted votes in local races, just as in plurality and majority systems. But at the second tier, most party votes contribute to the configuration of the legislature. Only votes for parties that do not cross the formal threshold are wasted.

An interesting example of party accountability was seen after New Zealand's first MMP election in 1996. The New Zealand First Party had led its supporters to believe it would partner with Labour following the election. In fact, its leader, Winston Peters, made a deal to form a coalition with the National Party. This turnabout disgraced NZ First (and, by association, the new MMP system) in many voters' eyes. In the next election, NZ First barely reached the threshold by winning one seat; it has still not recovered the support it lost by betraying the voters' trust. In the most recent campaign, the party promised to support whichever of Labour or the National Party won the most seats.

Accountability

One concern expressed about systems such as MMP that produce coalition governments is that voters have less clarity about who they can hold responsible for government policies. On the other hand, the system is responsive to changes in support, rewarding each party that attracts more votes and penalizing each party that loses votes. In addition, voters can hold individual constituency members accountable for their performance as representatives without punishing or rewarding the corresponding party's candidates. Members who hold proportional seats are not directly accountable to the voters, however; they are accountable only through the party vote. In countries like Germany, where the party lists of candidates are ranked at conventions held for that purpose, party members have an additional opportunity to hold elected representatives accountable.

MMP is the electoral system that has recently been recommended for consideration in three Canadian provinces: New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Quebec. In 2005 voters in Prince Edward Island voted against switching to MMP, but there is talk of revisiting the issue.

MIXED FAMILY

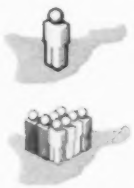
Parallel

Found in: Japan, Lithuania, Pakistan, Philippines, Russia, South Korea, Tunisia, and other countries

The **Parallel** system is used in Japan (since 1996), South Korea, and Russia and several other former Soviet countries as well as in a number of African and Asian countries. Sometimes called Mixed-Member Majoritarian (MMM), Parallel is similar in structure to MMP in that it aims to combine **proportionality** with the **geographical representation** provided by single-member districts. The significant difference is that, in the Parallel system, the second-tier seats are not compensatory.

ELEMENTS OF THE PARALLEL SYSTEM

Element 1: District Magnitude

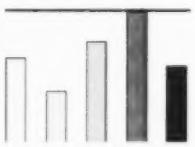


A Parallel system has two types of **electoral districts**.

Each geographic district elects one member to the legislature. Within a range of variation (to take account of geographical distances) each district contains roughly the same population. This is to ensure that each vote carries roughly the same weight.

In addition, a tier of proportional, at-large seats is drawn from a single national **constituency** or a number of regional constituencies.

Element 2: Electoral Formula

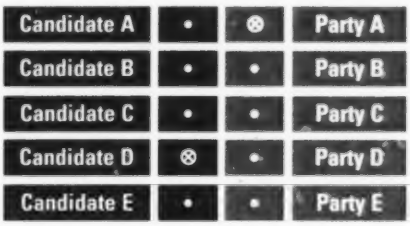


Elections for the local **constituency seats** are usually FPTP contests in which the **plurality formula** determines the winning candidate to be the one with more votes than any other candidate.

Another vote, the party vote, uses **List Proportional** Representation to determine the parties' shares of the second **tier** of seats. In the Parallel system, in contrast to MMP, the second-tier seats are not **compensatory**. For example, if a party wins 20% of the party vote, it will receive approximately 20% of the second-tier seats, not 20% of the total seats as it would under MMP. These **proportional seats** will be filled from the party's list of at-large candidates.

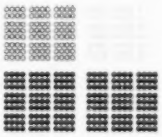
In the Parallel system, two separate elections are held at the same time, because the results of the two votes are not interrelated. The local FPTP races yield a group of locally elected members, and the List PR results produce another group, of at-large members.

Element 3: Ballot Type



In this system, voters receive a **double ballot.** On one side, they typically choose from a list of candidates seeking to represent their local constituency. On the other side, they choose from a list of political parties that are seeking representation in the legislature. Both sides are usually **categorical (exclusive) ballots**. The double ballot allows voters to choose a local candidate while also supporting a different party if they wish.

ELECTION RESULTS UNDER THE PARALLEL SYSTEM



Parallel systems such as those in Japan and South Korea typically produce disproportional results (although they are not as disproportional as they would be under plurality-only systems). This is because the disproportionality of the local results is not directly

Table 5.8 Election Results in Japan

House of Representatives, 2005

	Constituency			Proportional			Total	
	% of Votes	Seats	% of Seats	% of Votes	Seats	% of Seats	Seats	% of Seats
LDP	48.0	219	73.0	38.2	77	42.8	296	61.7
Dem	36.4	52	17.3	31.0	61	33.9	113	23.5
JCP	7.2	0	0	7.3	9	5.0	9	1.9
CGP	1.4	8	2.7	13.3	23	12.8	31	6.5
SDP	1.3	1	0.3	5.5	6	3.3	7	1.5
PNP	0.6	2	0.7	1.7	2	1.1	4	0.8
Other	5.0	18	6.0	3.0	2	1.1	20	4.1
TOTAL	99.9	300	100.0	100.0	180	100.0	480	100.0

LDP = Liberal Democratic Party
Dem = Democratic Party
JCP = Japanese Communist Party
CGP = Clean Government Party
SDP = Social Democratic Party
PNP = People's New Party

compensated for by the second tier. Moreover, there are usually many more first-tier seats than second-tier seats.

Japan has 180 second-tier seats and 300 first-tier seats. Table 5.8 shows how the proportional seats moderate the effects of the tremendous seat bonus won by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) at the constituency level. A substantial variation remains, however, between the LDP's percentage of total seats and its percentage of proportional seats – a gap that would be smaller under an MMP system.

The 2005 election results also demonstrate that many Japanese have taken advantage of the option to vote for a different political party than the one whose candidate they supported in the local contests. The significantly higher vote totals for smaller parties in the proportional race suggests that Japanese voters are aware that small parties have a greater chance of being elected under List PR. The Clean Government Party (CGP), for example, attracted only 1.4% of the vote in the constituency vote, but more than 13% in the party vote.

PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS



The Parallel system, like MMP, supports **multi-party systems**. The degree to which it does so is dependent upon the number of second-tier seats available, and what the **formal threshold** is. In the Philippines, which uses the Parallel system with a special provision that allows only small parties to win second-tier seats, 32 parties won seats in the 2004 election (although most won only one or two). The Philippine arrangement is an extreme example; in more established democracies like Japan and South Korea, only seven or eight parties typically win seats. That is a higher total than in most countries that use FPTP, like Canada, but still not as many parties as would be expected under most List PR systems.

GOVERNMENT



The type of government that results from elections under Parallel systems varies greatly according to how the two tiers of seats are structured. In South Korea and Japan, **majority government** is the norm, in part because there are many more first-tier seats than second-tier seats. In Lithuania and Russia, however, the two tiers have almost equal numbers of seats, which has led to more **coalition** majority governments. In general, the higher the number of first-tier seats, the greater the chance of single-party majority government; the higher the number of second-tier seats, the higher the likelihood of coalition government.

EVALUATING THE PARALLEL SYSTEM

Aspects of the Parallel system would be familiar to Ontario voters because the local elections are in single-member districts and, most commonly, use a plurality formula. The separation of the two elections may be easier to understand than MMP's system of compensatory seats. At the same time, the separate elections can be viewed as dividing the legislature into two distinct parts. Not only are there two tiers of legislators (as in MMP), but the results come from two separate elections and therefore may not be viewed as a unified expression of voters' preferences.

The Parallel system is less efficient at accommodating smaller parties than List PR and MMP but more efficient when compared with plurality/majority systems, which penalize small parties that are not regionally concentrated. In a Parallel system, any party that fails to win seats in the first-tier election has a second chance to win seats in the second tier, so long as it wins enough votes to reach any **formal** or **effective threshold**. Thus the Parallel system, by separating the first and second tiers, provides limited accommodation to smaller parties while at the same time supporting single-party majority governments. Still, the more dominant parties are likely to maintain their legislative strength, and this facilitates the formation of stable and effective governments. Japan, for example, has two dominant political parties that together won 90.3% of the seats in the first tier of the House of Representatives and 76.7% of the seats in the second.

The measure of support that a Parallel system offers to smaller parties means that results more accurately reflect voters' preferences than they would in plurality or majority systems. Nonetheless, unlike MMP, the Parallel system does not ensure proportionality, and although the second tier helps reduce overall discrepancies, the results are, at best, only semi-proportional.

Proportionality in Parallel systems can vary widely, however, depending on the ratio of first-tier seats to second-tier seats, as noted. Also significant are whether seats in the second tier are distributed regionally and which formula is used to decide races at the local level. A single nationwide second-tier district is likely to produce greater proportionality, because smaller parties with wide-spread support have a greater number of opportunities to attract votes in larger districts. Finally, where first-tier races are decided by a plurality formula, the results are likely to be slightly more proportional than under, for example, a Two-Round System.

Adopting a Parallel system would, like MMP, require deciding whether to enlarge the legislature to add a tier of proportional seats, or to use a proportion of the existing seats for the second tier.

Overall, while Parallel systems are similar in structure to MMP – employing two different electoral systems simultaneously – there are many important differences. The major differences between the two are that Parallel systems do not typically enable as high a degree of proportionality and they tend to produce single-party majority governments more often.

GLOSSARY

Adjustment seats – Second-tier seats in Mixed Member Proportional electoral systems (e.g., in Germany) or List Proportional Representation electoral systems (e.g., in Sweden). They are awarded to parties on the basis of their proportion of the national (or regional) vote in such a way as to adjust, or compensate, for seat bonuses and deficits in the first-tier races. Also called compensatory seats.

Alternative Vote (AV) – A majority electoral system (e.g., Australia), using single-member districts, an ordinal ballot, and, in Australia's case, required preferential voting. During the count, each ballot is treated as a single transferable vote; if no candidate receives a majority of the first preferences, preferences are transferred from the candidates with the least votes until a majority has been achieved.

Ballot type – The means by which electoral choices are presented to voters, as well as any rules about how those choices may be expressed. Ballots are normally categorical (also called exclusive) or ordinal (also called preferential).

Cabinet – Those members (usually elected) in a parliamentary system who comprise a collective executive by serving as ministers with specific areas of administrative and policy-making responsibility, called portfolios. The Cabinet must maintain the support of a majority of the legislature on key matters (see confidence). The party or parties that control the Cabinet form the government. Also called executive.

Categorical ballot – A ballot that requires voters to choose only one candidate and/or party. Also called exclusive ballot.

Closed list – In List Proportional Representation electoral systems, a type of ballot where voters choose a party list; voters are not allowed to change the order of candidates on the list.

Coalition government – A government in which two or more parties control the Cabinet, usually on the basis of a formal agreement about who will lead, how portfolios will be assigned, and what policies will be implemented.

Compensatory mechanisms – Various means by which an electoral system might allow political parties to take affirmative action or make other adjustments to promote segments of the population that have traditionally been underrepresented. One example is a "zippered" party list, which presents a gender-balanced slate of candidates to the electorate (first a woman, then a man, then a woman, and so on). Such a mechanism is possible in a multi-member district, but not in a single-member district, although other mechanisms might be applicable in both.

Compensatory seats – See adjustment seats.

Confidence – A parliamentary government remains in office only so long as it has the support of a majority of the legislature on key votes, known as questions or matters of confidence. A motion of non-confidence is a challenge for the government to prove it still has the support of the legislature; losing such a vote would require it to resign. A country's constitution and its parliamentary conventions will determine which votes count as confidence questions, but in almost all countries, matters of supply – votes authorizing the expenditure of public funds – are considered to indicate confidence.

Constituency – One of several terms used interchangeably, such as electoral district, riding, and electorate, to refer to the basic unit of an electoral system. It refers to a geographic area, to the eligible voters who live in that area, and to the number of legislators that this group of voters elects. One of the most fundamental distinctions between electoral systems is their use of single-member and/or multi-member districts. Different countries may prefer one of these terms (e.g., constituency in the U.K., electorate in New Zealand), but other terms may also be used within the same country in different contexts. For example, Elections Ontario usually refers to electoral districts, but the Legislative Assembly of Ontario identifies MPPs by riding and provides funds for offices and staff in their constituencies. In Ontario, MPPs are most likely to refer to ridings or constituencies.

Constituency seats – In countries with mixed systems, the first-tier seats, elected in single-member districts, are sometimes called constituency seats to distinguish them from second-tier seats, elected from national or regional lists.

D'Hondt formula – series of divisors (1, 2, 3, 4, and so on) used to allocate seats to parties in proportional representation systems under the Highest Averages method.

Demographic representation – A principle of representative fairness that suggests the demographic characteristics of a society, such as age, gender, and ethno-cultural identities, should be reflected in the composition of the legislature.

Disproportionality – The discrepancy between a party's vote share (the proportion of people voting for it) and its seat share (the proportion of the legislative seats it wins). One of the ways electoral systems are analyzed is by comparing the average amounts of disproportionality that they generate.

Dissolution – The formal dismissal of a parliament that must take place before an election can be held.

Distribution of preferences – See transfer of preferences.

District magnitude – The number of members elected in an electoral district. In First-Past-the-Post and majority systems, the district magnitude is always one. In proportional representation and mixed systems, the district magnitude is always greater than one.

Districts – See electoral districts.

Double ballot – In most mixed systems, a double ballot allows the voter to vote twice, usually once for a local representative and once for a political party.

Double threshold – In some countries, such as Germany and New Zealand, a party must obtain a specific level of support (a formal threshold) before qualifying for the distribution of any proportional seats. The threshold is defined as a specific percentage of votes or a specific number of constituency seats. In Germany and New Zealand, parties must satisfy one or the other requirement. A double threshold therefore gives parties two chances to qualify for proportional seats.

Droop quota – A quota calculated under the Largest Remainders method in proportional representation systems. In List Proportional Representation systems, the formula divides the vote total by the number of seats plus 1: $v \div (s + 1)$. The formula for the modified Droop quota, used in Ireland's Single Transferable Vote system, makes the same calculation and then adds one vote to the result. Quota = (Votes ÷ [Seats +1]) + 1.

Effective threshold – Not all electoral systems have a legal or formal threshold that parties must reach to qualify for seats, but for many systems it is possible to calculate the effective threshold: the level of support that in practice allows a party to win seats. In the 150-seat single-district parliament in the Netherlands, for example, the effective threshold is 0.67% of the total vote.

Electoral districts – Geographic areas into which a jurisdiction is divided for electoral purposes. Also called constituencies or ridings.

Electoral formula – The mathematical rules by which votes are turned into seats. Three basic rules are in use: the majority formula, the plurality formula, and proportional formulas.

Electoral parties – Parties that contest elections and attract votes but do not obtain enough support to win a seat, in contrast with parliamentary parties, which occupy seats in the legislature. The number of electoral parties is almost always larger than the number of parliamentary parties, and one way of comparing electoral systems is to look at how big this difference is.

Electorate – The primary term used in New Zealand to designate a riding, constituency, or electoral district. "Electorate" also refers to the voting public in general.

Exclusive ballot – See categorical ballot.

Executive – See Cabinet.

False winner – When a party gets more seats but fewer votes than another party and wins the election. Such a result is one possible outcome of disproportionality.

First Past the Post (FPTP) – A plurality electoral system, also known as Single-Member Plurality, in which voters choose one candidate in single-member districts using a categorical ballot. The candidate with the most votes (at least one more vote than any other candidate) wins the seat.

Formal threshold – The legal requirement that a party obtain a specific level of support, either a proportion of the vote or a number of constituency seats, to qualify for any distribution of proportional seats based on party vote.

Free list – In List Proportional Representation electoral systems, a party ballot that allows voters to choose from among different parties' lists and rank the candidates as they choose.

Gatekeeping function – The barriers that electoral systems put in the way of new and particularly very small political parties. On the one hand, this may prevent the proliferation of small parties and an overly fragmented party system; on the other, it may prevent the entry of new perspectives and voices into the legislature and government.

Geographic representation – The principle that voters have an identifiable representative who is associated with the community in which they live and responsible for representing its interests. Single-member districts are more likely to provide geographic representation than multi-member districts, but only when they do not become too large, in terms of either population or geographic size.

Hare quota – A quota calculated under the Largest Remainders method in proportional representation systems. The simplest quota, it results from dividing the number of votes by the number of seats: $v \div s$.

Highest Averages method – A method of allocating seats in proportional representation systems. A series of divisors is applied to the parties' vote totals. After each seat is awarded, the total for that party is divided again by the next divisor in the series. See d'Hondt formula and Sainte-Laguë formula.

Imperiali quota – A quota calculated under the Largest Remainders method in proportional representation systems. It results from dividing the number of votes by the number of seats plus 2: $v \div (s + 2)$.

Informal ballots – In Australia, the term for spoiled ballots: those that are marked in some way contrary to the rules and are therefore ineligible to be included in the count of any candidate or party. A large number of informal ballots may indicate that voters find the rules and procedures too complicated, or it may indicate a protest vote. In Australia, with compulsory voting and required preferential balloting, both are possible.

Largest Remainders method – A method of allocating seats in proportional representation systems. Different formulas are used to calculate a Hare, Droop, or Imperiali quota. Each party's vote total is divided by the quota, and candidates who reach the quota are elected. If seats remain to be distributed after the full-quota seats have been determined, they go in order to the parties with the largest numbers of votes left over – that is, the largest remainders.

List Proportional Representation (List PR) – A proportional representation electoral system employing multi-member districts and party list ballots. Lists can be open, closed, or free. Different methods and formulas are used to allocate seats to the parties in proportion to their vote shares.

Majority formula – An electoral formula that requires the winning candidate to receive more votes than all the other candidates combined – at least 50% plus one vote. It is a component of majority systems.

Majority government – A government in which the party that controls the Cabinet also commands a majority in the legislature. The term is usually applied to a single-party majority as opposed to a coalition government, which may also command the support of a majority in the legislature.

Majority systems – Citizens vote in single-member districts and the candidate who secures a majority of the vote wins the seat (majority formula); Alternative Vote and the Two-Round System are majority electoral systems.

Mandate – The basis on which a member is elected. In some Mixed Member Proportional systems, for example, the distinction is made between local mandates and proportional (or "at large") mandates.

Manufactured majority – A party that wins a majority of the seats but with less than a majority of the votes has a manufactured majority. In other words, a seat bonus creates the majority.

Margin of victory – The amount by which the winning candidate's or party's vote total exceeds the second-place candidate's or party's total.

Minority government – A government in which the party that controls the Cabinet commands less than a majority in the legislature. It may be a single-party minority or a minority coalition.

Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system – A mixed electoral system in which a proportion of the parliament is elected from single-member districts and the remainder from party lists in such a way that seat shares correspond to the parties' vote shares. Voters usually cast a double ballot, voting on one side for their local representative and on the other side for a political party.

Mixed systems – Electoral systems with two tiers of seats, each elected on a distinct basis: for example, one tier under Single-Member Plurality and another under proportional representation). This category includes Mixed Member Proportional, Parallel, and Additional-Member Systems.

Modified Droop quota – See Droop quota.

Modified Sainte-Laguë formula – See Sainte-Laguë formula.

Multi-member district – An electoral district with a district magnitude greater than one. Voters there elect more than one member, usually several. Multi-member districts are a basic component of proportional representation and mixed systems.

Multi-party system – A type of party system in which three or more parties are competitive – that is, they become parliamentary parties.

National list – A party list composed of candidates standing for election in a country-wide district. In many Mixed Member Proportional systems and some List Proportional Representation sytems second tier seats are filled from parties' national lists.

Non-monotonicity – An increase in vote share that leads directly to a loss in seat share, or vice versa.

Open list – In a List Proportional Representation system, a party list that allows voters to express a preference for one or more of a party's candidates.

Optional preferential voting – In a system employing ordinal ballots, optional preferential voting allows voters to rank as many or as few preferences as they choose. See also required preferential voting.

Ordinal ballot – A ballot that allows or requires voters to rank candidates as their first preference, second preference, and so on. This type of ballot is used, among others, in the Alternative Vote system in Australia and the Single Transferable Vote system in Ireland. Also called preferential ballot.

Overhang seat – An extra seat added to a legislature in Mixed Member Proportional electoral systems when parties win more seats in the first tier than their total vote share entitles them to. Overhang seats are needed to ensure that no party loses a seat that has been won at the local level.

Parallel systems – Parallel electoral systems are mixed systems in which one tier or group of seats is elected on a plurality or majority formula and another tier is elected on a proportional basis. In these systems, in contrast to Mixed Member Proportional systems, the results in the first tier have no influence on the distribution of seats in the second tier – that is, there are no adjustment seats.

Parliamentary government – A type of constitution in which the Cabinet is responsible to the legislature, in contrast to the separation of powers that marks the presidential-congressional model of the United States.

Parliamentary parties – Parties that occupy seats in the legislature, in distinction from electoral parties, which win votes but not seats. The Green Party in Canada, for example, is an electoral party but has not been a parliamentary party. The Liberal Party has always been a parliamentary party.

Party discipline – Particularly in parliamentary systems, elected representatives are expected to vote the same way as the other members of their party, regardless of personal beliefs or the preferences of their constituents.

Party list – In List Proportional Representation systems with multi-member districts, the parties compile lists of candidates to be elected. These lists can be closed, open, or free.

Party system – The number and type of established parties. The party system is shaped by the electoral system. Two dominant types are the two-party system and the multi-party system.

Party vote – In mixed systems using a double ballot, the party vote enables voters to express a preference for a political party separately from their vote for a local candidate. In systems using only single-member districts, there is no seperate party vote, and choosing a candidate on the ballot is also the means by which a party preference is expressed. In List Proportional Representation, the party-centred ballot produces a party vote and may or may not allow voters to state a preference among the party's candidates.

Plurality formula – An electoral formula requiring the winning candidate to receive more votes than any other candidate. It is a component of plurality systems.

Plurality systems – Electoral systems that rely on a plurality formula. Most common is the First Past the Post system, in which citizens vote in single-member districts and the candidate who secures a plurality of the vote (at least one more vote than any other candidate) wins the seat.

Portfolio – An area of administrative and policy-making responsibility – such as defence, finance, education, or labour – assigned to a member of the Cabinet, and sometimes equivalent to a ministry or department.

Preferential ballot – See ordinal ballot.

Proportional formula – Electoral formulas and systems in which seats are allocated to parties in proportion to the shares of votes that the parties receive.

Proportional representation (PR) systems – Electoral systems characterized by electoral formulas that attempt to achieve proportionality. The two main types are List Proportional Representation and Single Transferable Vote.

Proportional seats – Although this describes all seats in a proportional representation system, the term usually refers to the second tier of seats in a mixed system. These seats are elected on a proportional basis (in contrast to a non-proportional first tier of constituency seats) and may or may not also serve as adjustment seats.

Proportionality – A match between seat share (the product of an electoral system) and vote share (the direct expression of the electorate's preferences). Proportionality is commonly seen to be a principle of fairness.

Quota – The number of votes required to obtain a seat in a proportional representation system with multi-member districts. The quota for each election is derived from a formula that computes the number of votes cast and the number of seats to be elected. See Hare quota, Droop quota, and Imperiali quota.

Regional lists – In Mixed Member Proportional systems, regional lists may be used to allocate second-tier seats (in Germany).

Representation by population – The principle that each citizen's vote should carry the same weight, usually understood to mean that each representative should represent approximately the same number of constituents.

Required preferential voting – The requirement that voters mark a preference for every candidate on the ordinal ballot, and that these preferences constitute a proper numerical sequence, with no repeats or omissions. Required preferential voting is used in Australia's Alternative Vote system. See also optional preferential voting.

Responsible government – A fundamental principle of the parliamentary system requiring the Cabinet to maintain the confidence (the support of a majority) of the legislature.

Riding – See constituency.

Sainte-Laguë formula – A series of divisors (1, 3, 5, 7, and so on) used to allocate seats to parties in proportional representation systems under the Highest Averages method. The modified Sainte-Laguë formula used in some jurisdictions replaces 1 with 1.4.

Seat bonus (deficit) – A seat bonus is awarded by the electoral system when a party obtains a seat share that is larger than its vote share; a seat deficit is suffered when a party receives a seat share that is smaller than its vote share.

Seat share – The proportion of the seats in the legislature that a party holds.

Second-tier seats – Seats in a mixed system that are usually elected on a proportional basis and may serve as adjustment seats that compensate for disproportionality in the the first-tier seats, usually chosen by majority or under Single-Member Plurality. In a List-PR system, the second-tier may be a small group of seats allocated on the basis of national party lists also serving as adjustment seats vis-à-vis the first tier.

Single-member districts – Districts in which voters elect one member of the legislature, used in plurality and majority systems and for election of the first tier of seats in most mixed systems.

Single-Member Plurality (SMP) – See First Past the Post.

Single Transferable Vote (STV) system – A proportional representation electoral system that uses preferential ballots. Counting involves determining a quota, and if necessary, continuing with the **transfer of preferences** until all seats have been filled.

Single transferable votes – The counting of ordinal ballots in Alternative Vote (in Australia) and in Single Transferable Vote (in Ireland and Malta) treats voters' choices as single transferable votes. If the result is not determined on the basis of the first preferences on each ballot, ballots representing surplus votes or last-place finishers are reallocated on the basis of the second preferences, and so on.

Strategic campaigning – The practice of political parties focusing their election campaigns on specific districts (usually identified through polling and past voting patterns) in which they have a stronger chance of winning.

Strategic voting – Voting deliberately for a party that is not the voter's first preference, in order to achieve an objective other than electing the preferred party. In a plurality or majority system, a voter might vote for a less preferred party to help prevent an even less favoured party or candidate from winning the seat. In some proportional representation systems that have a formal threshold, adherents of one party might vote for another like-minded party that is a possible or likely coalition partner.

Supply – See confidence.

Surplus votes – Votes a candidate receives beyond the total necessary to win a seat. Surplus votes have a practical effect only in Single Transferable Vote systems, where votes for any candidate that exceed the quota in one count are reallocated on the basis of next preferences to other candidates; see transfer of preferences.

Thresholds – See double threshold, effective threshold, formal threshold.

Tier – A group of seats in the legislature elected on a different basis from other seats. In a mixed system, seats from single-member districts constitute the first tier, and a group of seats elected from national or regional party lists constitute the second tier. It is also possible, though, to have two (or more) tiers in a List Proportional Representation system, where one tier is elected in regional multi-member districts and the second tier consists of a group of national party list seats serving as adjustment seats. Both Hungary (Mixed Member Proportional) and Austria (List PR) have three tiers (local, regional, and national).

Transfer of preferences – Part of the counting procedure when ordinal ballots are treated as single transferable votes. It involves reallocating votes for the last-place candidate (and surplus votes in some systems) among the remaining candidates according to the next preference marked on each ballot. In Alternative Vote, the first transfer takes place if no candidate has secured a majority in the first count, and the process continues until someone has acquired a majority of the ballots. In Single Transferable Vote, the transfer begins if not all the seats have been filled by candidates whose first-preference votes exceeded the quota, and it continues until all available seats have been filled in this manner, or until no more transfers can be made. Also called distribution of preferences.

Transparency – The degree of ease with which voters can understand not only the act of voting but also the calculation of the results.

Two-party-preferred votes – A way of measuring support for the two largest parties (or party groupings) under Alternative Vote.

Two-party system – A type of party system in which two parties are competitive – that is, they typically win enough seats to be the government or the official opposition.

Two-Round System (TRS) – A majority electoral system in which citizens vote in single-member districts using a categorical ballot. If no candidate secures a majority of votes (50% plus one vote), a second round of voting is held in which the number of candidates is reduced (ideally to two) and the candidate who finishes first in the second round is the winner.

Volatility – The tendency for parties to experience large swings in their level of support from one election to another. Also, the tendency of voters to switch their support from one party to another in successive elections. The latter may not be as obvious if there are offsetting movements of voters back and forth between the parties.

Vote share – A party's proportion of the overall votes cast in the election.

Vote splitting – The opportunity for voters to vote more than one way, as with a double ballot, where a vote for a local representative is separate from a vote for a political party. For political parties in multi-member districts (particularly in Single Transferable Vote systems), vote splitting involves the possibility that voters may divide their votes between two candidates of the same party, thereby decreasing the likelihood that either will be elected.

Wasted votes – Votes that do not find direct expression in election results – that is, they do not bring representation in the legislature. The term applies, for example, to all votes for non-winning candidates in plurality and majority systems.

Winner-take-all – Characteristic of any electoral district where only one party is able to win the seats. Whenever there is a district magnitude of one, only one candidate can "take all."

DESIGN AND LAYOUT



WWW.PICCADILLY.ON.CA



ISBN 978-1-4249-4529-0 (Print) ISBN 978-1-4249-4530-6 (PDF) © Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2007